

M.F.A.
DOCUMENTATION

MARIE SIERRA HUGHES

Presented in this volume is the documentation of the work
produced during 1984-1985 within the Master of Fine Arts course
in candidacy for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ART

SCHOOL OF ART
UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA
1985

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the staff of the Tasmanian School of Art, with special gratitude to Les Blakeborough and Penny Smith for their generous help and advice. The other candidates to the Masters course were also instrumental in the work undertaken, and their counselling, criticism and concern is vastly appreciated.

Special thanks are extended to Ernest Moskovics, Helen Sierra Moskovics, and Owen Hughes, whose unyielding support and belief caused the work presented herein to exist, and my living in a new country to begin.

PREFACE

The purpose of embarking on the Masters course was to hone ideas, clarifying their visual expression through the critical assessment of supervisors and peers. Reasons for coming from America to do the course included the need for a new environment, one less insular and predictable than found in U.S. ceramic sculpture programs. The work produced was a result of the constant re-evaluation only available from within an institution such as the Tasmanian School of Art; its inception, development and finalization rely heavily on the two years involvement in the course, the documentation of which is presented here.

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

PROPOSAL
AND
PROPOSAL PERSPECTIVE

School of Art
1984-1985

PROPOSAL

The main source of energy for my concepts is decay, especially the paradoxical deterioration of "permanent" markers of past civilizations. The monuments and public buildings of lost cultures, as well as tombstones, sarcophagi and other markers of "permanence" all take on an ironic context when seen in a state of decomposition. They become poignant reminders of our own impermanence, resonating through our time as they mark their own. The sculptural use of clay is my avenue for the artistic exploration of "permanent" architecture, and in an unfired state it speaks even more clearly of entropy. I intend to continue working in unfired clay as a main medium, mixing in other mediums where necessary, such as found objects. Conceptual and installation work are by no means excluded and may evolve as short-term goals, but the main body of work will be gallery oriented pieces.

Entropy was initially brought to my attention through working in unfired clay, creating pieces left outside to deteriorate. The Second Law of Thermodynamics defines entropy as a "measure of disorder," the concept that any order will devolve towards a state of disorder.¹ An "increase of entropy often leads to a state of equilibrium,"² the balance

¹Jacob Bronowski, The Ascent of Man (London; BBC, 1973), p. 347-8.

²Rudolph Arnheim, Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 25.

at the end of a cycle where formation / deterioration meet. Robert Smithson (1938-1973) was an American "Earth Art" sculptor who was aware of this delicate balance and the interconnection of all things. Of entropy he stated "...it's a condition that's irreversible, it's a condition that's moving towards a gradual equilibrium and is suggested in many ways."³ Ancient and modern architectural and object "ruins" are capable of powerful statements about the entropy to which we are subject. As the thirteenth century philosopher Ibn Khaldun noted:

The world of the elements and all it contains comes into being and decays. Minerals, plants, all the animals including man, and the other created things come into being and decay, as one can see with one's own eyes. The same applies to the conditions that affect created things, and especially the conditions that affect man. Sciences grow up and then are wiped out. The same applies to crafts, and similar things.⁴

Everything fades, breaks down, only to be reformed, the same elements in a new structure. In studying ancient cultures, one follows their rise and fall, and soon our own instability becomes poignant. Knowing we are subject to this great grinding stone, we are frantic to leave some trace of our existence in works of art, buildings, memorials or other ephemera.

Unfired, stabilized clay has a long history in building, and research especially of its sculptural use from ancient to modern time is proposed for a first year paper. Unfired clay has recently been recognized as a valid sculptural medium, as seen in the works of George Geyer, Tom McMillin, Katherine Ross, Howard Shapiro and John Goodheart.⁵

³Robert Smithson, "Entropy Made Visible," in The Writings of Robert Smithson, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 189.

⁴Ibn Khaldun, The Mugaddimah: An Introduction to History, translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal, Abridged and Edited by N.J. Dawood (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 105.

⁵Elain Levin, "George Geyer, Tom McMillin: New Definitions,"

Theoretical aspects of the recent recognition of this medium could be dealt with in a second year paper. Research in these areas would not only lend me technical insights into methods of stabilization of an unfired state, but also heighten my awareness of its history in specific cultures and its artistic capabilities as a material.

May, 1984

Ceramics Monthly 29 (October 1981): 50-57; for Howard Shapiro see "Workshop at Notre Dame," Ceramics Monthly 28 (May 1980): 38-39; "Katherine Ross," Ceramics Monthly 30 (November 1982): 47; and John Goodheart, "NCECA Conference," Ceramics Monthly 26 (September 1978).

PROPOSAL PERSPECTIVE

Through the two years of study and two seminar papers, a more homogenized, less romantic view of two key interests has been gained: entropy as content and clay as an art-making material. Working with forms that were about decay rather than actually decaying forced me to concentrate more strongly on the viewers' interpretation of the finished work. In previous process works (carried out in undergraduate courses), any message about decay was inherent and therefore clear; in the majority of works completed in this course, stabilization of the deterioration process required that the content become more apparent and "readable," and so strengthened my concepts considerably.

The concept of entropy proved an inexhaustable source for art practice. Best known as the second law of thermodynamics, the theory also applies to studies such as information science, where it is seen as a measure of an increase in disorder, or a move towards chaos. In thermodynamics, the entropy theory states that although energy can be tranformed, doing so cannot take place without some energy becoming unavailable for work. In both disciplines, and especially in art, entropy harbors an encroaching sense of decay, as it is constantly increasing towards a final state of equilibrium. Central to the work produced, this idea was manifested in "decaying" architectural forms such as towers, chosen for their connotations of power. Retaining some sense of an

underlying structure in order to contrast the decay intensified the irony and inevitability of entropy in the work. This approach opened many other avenues for practice, and although entropy was the mainstay, these explorative ventures granted considerable insight.

The first paper laid important historical groundwork for the second, which resurrected the suspicion long held that nature cannot be known. Much of the work yielded a coming to terms with working with a material inherently seen as "natural," but which also, and often primarily, needed to be viewed as "sculptural." My understanding of and working with entropy in art was influenced by Rudolf Arnheim's "Entropy and Art," as well as Jeremy Rifkin's book "Entropy: A New World View."¹ From the date of the proposal on, content in the work became of main importance, which was the overall aim of embarking on the course initially.

November, 1985

¹Rudolf Arnheim, Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1971); Jeremy Rifkin, Entropy: A New World View, (New York: Viking Press, 1980).

FIRST SEMINAR PAPER

A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF RAW CLAY:
Architecture and Art

First Year Masters Seminar
1984

FOREWORD

The research behind this paper was intended to widen the knowledge of the uses of unfired clay throughout history. For such a common material, references to the use of raw clay, especially in art, were few and varied, with little interconnecting information. As a result, many areas were explored, including sculpture, ceramics, architecture, and some archaeology.

As a skein of information unraveled, the interdependent nature of these fields in reference to the one material began to appear. Major interest was directed at the effect of the Earth Art movement on the sculptural use of raw clay, especially in the previously somewhat insular field of ceramics. The exchange of ideas and knowledge between these two fields broadened my technical knowledge of raw clay immensely, but more importantly, gave me insight into why I was drawn to the material initially, and why I found it an appropriate medium for my concepts.

INTRODUCTION

Historians theorize that the discovery of clay becoming rock-like when exposed to high temperatures was a case of pure serendipity. A piece of clay was formed by hand and left close to a camp fire, only to be rediscovered as "fired" in the cooling ashes. Durable enough for functional ware, permanent enough for sculpture, fired clay has been the norm in the production of ceramics for centuries. But at certain times and places, these norms have been disregarded for two reasons: firstly, fuel was either too expensive or inaccessible, or the clay form too large, as in some architecture; secondly, there has been a continuing tradition of those who prefer to leave their clay unfired. Within recent ceramic history, the second group has been small if not nonexistent: it took the advent of the Earth art sculptors and energy crisis to renew unfired clay's status as an art-making material, and slowly it has regained acceptance in the ceramic as well as the art world.

In the past thirty years, ceramics has proved itself a viable artistic medium. Sculptural ceramics have made their way to the gallery and museum, evolving away from the circular art/craft debate without denying the historical vessel aesthetic. Conceptualism, Earth art, happenings, process works and performances flourished, encouraging ceramicists to view their materials in a new light. In the 1970's several important shows took place that centered on or included unfired clay.

Documentation of these events continues to reveal clay to us today as a dynamic medium, increasing our ceramic vocabulary as the effect of movements in other disciplines becomes apparent. Unfired clay's recent sculptural use is located within the ceramic discipline while its roots also lie in functional and nonfunctional object-making and architecture. Its use is reviewed here within a ceramic context, noting people who revived the use of unfired clay, as well as those who use the medium today.

UNFIRED CLAY IN HISTORY

"Clay, formless in the earth, is laden with potential," said Daniel Rhodes, one of the leaders of the ceramic movement in the 1950's.¹ This amorphous, hydrous silica-alumina compound yields willingly to the hand, and through its various stages of drying, ambient water evaporates to leave a stiffened effigy of the form give when damp. Halting the process at this point goes against any ceramicist's sensibilities, but there was a time when one could go no further.

Utensils and Objects

Before the discovery of firing, simple mud was used for lining baskets, cooking surfaces, and building shelter; in many parts of the world, it still serves some of these purposes. Highly accessible and easily worked, mud and clay have been a valuable material for thousands of years. To better understand ancient mud artifacts, the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University launched a study in southern Iraq, where mud objects are still produced in much the same manner and for the same functions as they were four and a half millennia ago.²

Other than its use for architecture in the region, sun dried mud objects are employed for cooking, toy making and jewelry by the Hadij, a

¹Daniel Rhodes, Clay and Glazes for the Potter, rev. ed. (Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Co, 1973), xvii.

²Edward Ochsenchlager, "Mud Objects from al-Hiba," Archaeology 27 (1974): 162.

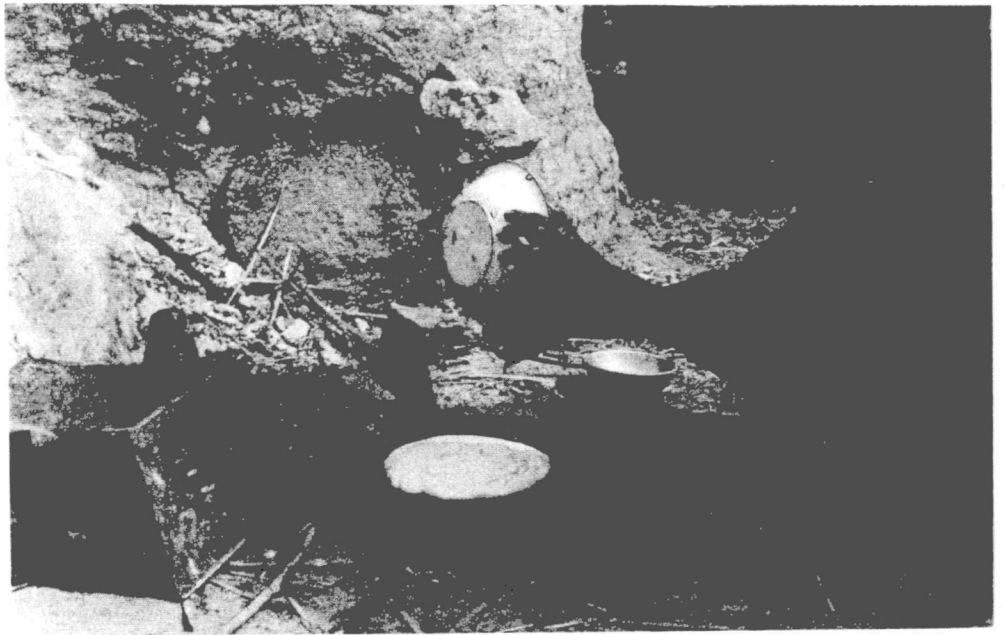
Bedouin tribe. Unbaked utensils are ideal for these nomadic people, as they can be left at one camp and reproduced at the next. In fact, mud utensils are broken before embarking for the new location. The tabag, a heavy dish for baking, and the manqala, a shallow dish with legs, are used for cooking most frequently. Unbaked wares are preferred to those made of metal, which may scorch the nomads' rugs. Often one utensil serves many functions; a manqala may can make tea, supper and be used for warmth as well. More elaborate is the tanur, or oven, used for baking wheat bread. Mud storage vessels also protect grain from courtyard animals, and an earth grain grinder also exists. Children are kept entertained making mud toys; musical instruments such as whistles and drums are also made. Mud jewelry, however, is made exclusively for the deceased. Produced by the closest female relative, it is formed to imitate the jewelry the person wore when alive and is buried with him or her in its place.³



A manqala being
used for cooking
and boiling water
for tea.

³Ibid., : 162-74.

A village woman
pouring rice-bread
dough on a hot tabag.
In the background
are visible two
of the three supports
which held the tabag
over the fire
while it was heated
and another tabag
standing on edge.



[Fig.1: Manqala and Tabag, in Archaeology 27 (1974): 165.]

Architecture

Architecture of adobe or pise is perhaps the most well-known use of unfired clay, and presently houses one third of the world's population.⁴ One of the earliest building materials, it is thought to date to the Neolithic period (10,000 to 3000 B.C.).⁵ Some familiar earth structures of antiquity include Jericho, the oldest known city; parts of the Great Wall of China, which date from the third century B.C.; and the 90 meter Tower of Babel, from the seventh century B.C. Virtually every continent has an example of the architectural use of unbaked earth. The cities of Morocco are fortified with walls dating to the 12th century.

⁴Jean Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: an old idea, a new future (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 7

⁵Paul Wencil Brown and James R. Clifton, "Adobe 1: The Properties of Adobe," Studies in Conservation 23 (1978): 139-140.

The Alhambra, in Granada, Spain and public buildings of the Burgundy and Dauphine vicinities of France are from the 13th century. Eighteenth century Milton Abbas in Dorset, England and 19th century Weilburg, Germany are other European illustrations, while in the Americas, Sante Fe, New Mexico and Bogota, Columbia have unbaked earth buildings from the 16th century Spanish sovereignty, which influenced techniques already in use there. The Berbers, Ashanti and people of Mali in Africa, Mochica of the Andes, Aztecs, Toltecs and Chinese all know unfired clay as a durable and ubiquitous building material.⁶



[Fig.2: Aerial view of Seojane, Iran in Dethier, Down to Earth]

With the onset of the energy crisis, adobe architecture experienced a revival, especially in the American Southwest. As neutral temperatures

⁶Dethier, Down to Earth, pp. 7-27.

are maintained indoors year round, earth homes have become recognized as sound investments. New materials have been added for extra stabilization, such as asphaltum, and an optimum sand/clay ratio has been found to be approximately 4:1.⁷ Modern exterior coverings are now often used, such as a thin layer of concrete over wire mesh, but some keep to tradition, with the annual exterior refacing of mud becoming a family or community event, as at the Church of Rancho de Taos in New Mexico. For many years, European pise has set the precedent for the use of earth in damper climates by making the first course of stone to protect the building from standing water. A new appreciation has been found there for unfired architecture, inspiring the exhibition "Des Architectures de Terre" at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris in 1981-82; this was followed in turn by Jean Dethier's book on ancient and modern adobe use, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: an old idea, a new future (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).

Recently, an interesting technique was pioneered by Nadar Kahlili in Iran. After observing the effects of extreme weather conditions on native adobe desert villages, he devised a way of firing houses, a process called geltaftan. Buildings are made kiln-like by blocking doors and windows, then burning ports are placed, employing existing chimneys as flues for the kerosene firing. Little or no wooden support is used and the cost is roughly one third that of conventional architecture.⁸

⁷Brown and Clifton, "Adobe 1": 140.

⁸Jim Danisch, "Nader Khalili: Fired Houses," Ceramics Monthly 31 (November 1983): 50-54.

Sculpture

In reviewing the history of unbaked earth, one must be careful not to deny its use in sculpture. Few ancient examples survive, but it can be surmised that mud and clay were often used in early sculpting, just as in utensils and small objects.

In 1972 the Caballo Muerto complex was excavated in Coastal Peru. Occupied by the Cupisnique people in the early centuries of the first millenium B.C., it contains some interesting ancient adobe. One specific site, the Huaca de los Reyes, or "Shrine of Kings," revealed adobe friezes and fragmented walls that help separate the work of the Cupisnique from that of the Chavin de Huantar site in the Peruvian Andes with which it had previously been associated.⁹ Entirely constructed of adobe, the site consists of some architectural ruins, but large sculptural heads, zoomorphic and standing figures dominate. Combining feline and anthropomorphic motifs, the massive heads are set into large niches and have traces of paint. Similar figures are found in other areas in northern coastal Peru, but those at Huaca de los Reyes are the best preserved, and the standing figures seem to be the only of their kind. Though now eroded to the knees, they seem to have been quite prominent at one time. The zoomorphic figures also combine decorative elements in a manner exclusive to the site.¹⁰

⁹M. Edward Moseley and Luis Watanabe, "The Adobe Sculpture of Huaca de los Reyes," Archaeology 27 (1974): 155.

¹⁰*Ibid.*: 154-161.



[Fig.3: Sculptural Head from Huaca de los Reyes, Peru,
in Archaeology 27 (1974): 155.]

EARTHWORKS: ROOTS AND REVIVAL

Emanating from their growing relationship with the natural world, large outdoor sculpture became a form of early human reverence for nature and gods alike. Numerous stone examples still exist, in such familiar forms as Stonehenge and Easter Island, but many works directly made of earth also remain. Two interesting sites are the Serpent Mound in Ohio, dating from 1000 B.C. - 700 A.D., and Dorset's Cerne Abbas Giant from the first century B.C. While the Giant is a male figure, and

festivities connected with it are focused on this (on Mayday the Giant's penis points directly to the sunrise), the Serpent Mound is thought to be akin to the female figure due to its spiral-like shape.



[Fig.4: Serpent Mound, Ohio, in Lippard, Overlay.]

A symbol found in many cultures, the spiral is "associated with woman, with eyes, the moon and rebirth, with earth energies, with water and with the snake - the only vertebrate whose movements reproduce the patterns of water."¹¹ Woman has been associated with nature throughout history. The growing influence of Church and State, however, resulted in nature's association with the irrational unconscious, resulting in a nature/culture schism. The concept of the garden was formulated from this split, becoming a place "midway between nature and

¹¹Jill Purce, The Mystic Spiral (New York: Avon, 1974), p. 59 in Lucy R. Lippard, "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art," Art in America 69 (November 1981): 142.

art and [it] may be debauched either way."¹²

The garden became an important springboard for "anti-formalist" art of the 1960's and '70's. Two needs the garden or park stress are a return to an awareness of nature, and an open, far-reaching audience. Feeling the contemporary art market imposed a capitalist structure that alienated maker from made and art from life, artists left the galleries to mend the break between nature and spirit. They worked in performance, installation and site sculpture, becoming "major protagonists of their art ideas," striving to "reinvest art with meaning."¹³ In the United States, many Earth art sculptors ventured to the Southwestern deserts, where the "illusion of return after devastation appeared complete."¹⁴

Robert Smithson summarized some of the antiformalist feeling of the time: "Museums are tombs, and it looks like everything is turning into a museum . . . art settles into a stupendous inertia."¹⁵ So the gallery tradition was broken by the works of artists such as Smithson, Michael Heizer, and Walter De Maria. Through studying the ancients, they were often drawn to the larger works that could only be seen from above, as these seemed to fuse intuition with physical awareness. The anthropomorphic forms of antiquity were produced by a people who fully understood their relation to nature's life-sustaining force - an

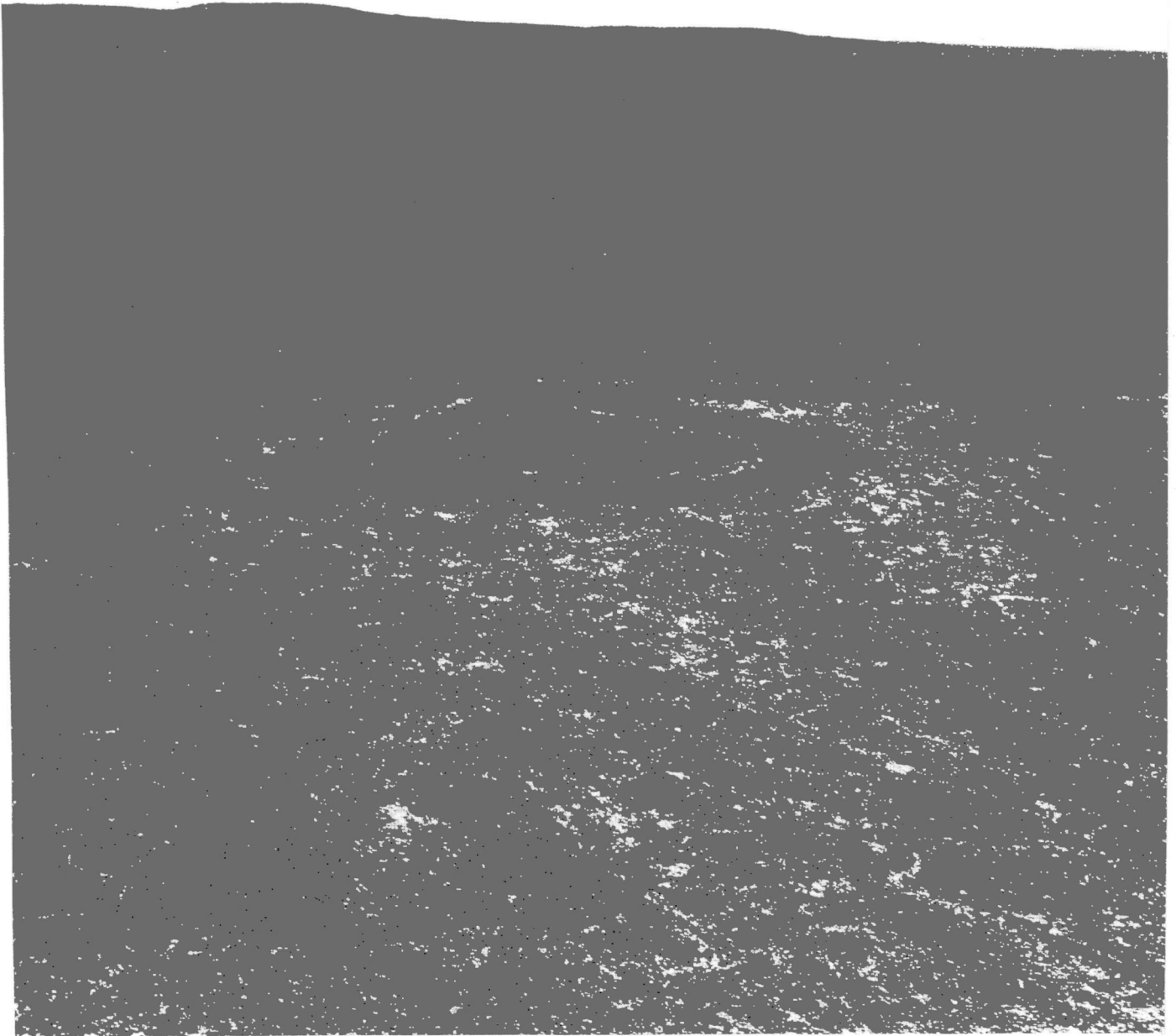
¹²Paul Shepard, Man and the Landscape (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1967), p. 117.

¹³Lippard, "Gardens": 137-38.

¹⁴Paul Shepard, Man in the Landscape, quoted by Lippard, "Gardens: Some Metaphors": 138.

¹⁵Robert Smithson, "Some Void Thoughts on Museums," in Nancy Holt, ed., The Writings of Robert Smithson (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 58.

understanding the ecology movement of the 1960's and 1970's was also striving to reinstate.



[Fig.5: Michael Heizer, Isolated Mass/Circumflex, 1968, Vya, Nevada, in Michael Heizer, (Essen: Museum Folkwang, 1979)].

Eventually the Earth art sculptors made their mark not only outdoors, but in the gallery as well. Most did some gallery-oriented pieces (e.g., Smithson's work in the National Gallery, Canberra; Richard Long's 1976 Venice Biennale "Stone Sculpture"). Others explored the extremes of

public and non-public works. Walter De Maria's "The Lightning Field" (1977) is on a 7,200 foot uninhabited plain five hours from Albuquerque, completely surrounded by mountains. One must stay there a few days in the cabin provided to fully experience climatic changes on the 400 polished stainless steel rods.¹⁶ De Maria's "New York Earth Room," however, is a permanent occupant of 141 Wooster Street, New York City (two similar rooms were exhibited in Munich and Darmstadt, Germany). The 3,600 square feet of earth weighing 280,000 pounds is just a lift ride away from the bustle below.¹⁷ One comes in out of the sounds and smell of the city to be confronted with the damp humus and minimalistic silence of the room; an example, perhaps, of Jack Burnham's concept of the artist as shaman, "[drawing] people away from substitute objects and back towards the ancient memories of life and productivity."¹⁸

RECENT UNFIRED SCULPTURAL CLAY

Generally the ceramic movement since the late 1950's has progressed in a similar way as movements in other art forms. The first to show its influence was Abstract Expressionism, followed by Minimalism, Funk, Conceptualism and Earth art. People working in clay began to see their medium turning up in museums and galleries in the form of installations and performance, with no apparent prejudice as to what materials could

¹⁶Melinda Wortz, "Walter De Maria's 'The Lightning Field,'" Arts Magazine 54 (May 1980): 170-73.

¹⁷"New York Earth Room," Ceramics Monthly (September 1980): 61.

¹⁸Jack Burnham, "The Artist as Shaman," Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art (New York: George Braziller, 1974), p. 144.

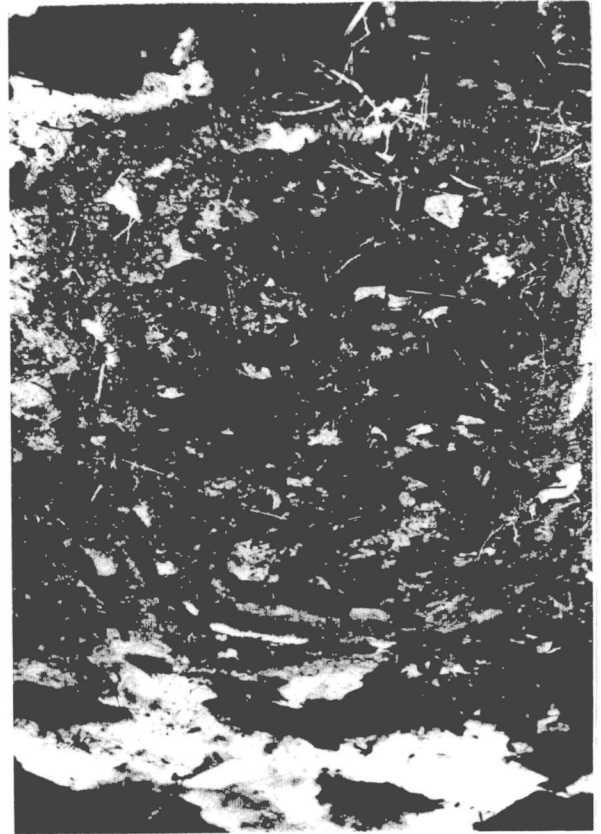
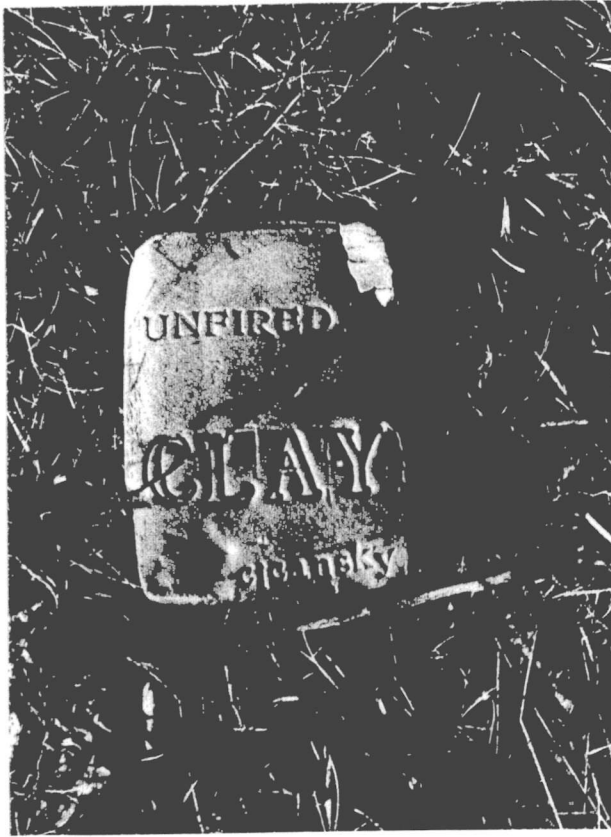
be employed. In these other fields there was no "craft" barrier to leap, since the works were produced for a fine art audience. Concomitantly, ceramic sculptors broke down the conventions of the ceramic framework, and the interest in unfired clay was revived.

Most who worked in clay at the time were well aware of adobe and its long history in architecture. Temporal Conceptual works in sculpture and Earth art gave rise to an interest in clay as a process-oriented material, so most works of this time survive in documentation. One of the first recorded events was one of two "Happenings" at Southern Illinois University, the national open invitational "Unfired Clay Exhibition '70." Held entirely outdoors after a January snowstorm, the 62 entries were left after opening day to suffer the elements and interact with the environment. Participants included Nicholas Vergette (whose farm was the site for the show), Robert Arneson (not physically present, but instructions were sent for his "Earth Link"), James Melchert, Jim Cicansky, Mags Harries, David Gilhooly (frog-like figures were propelled into the air from bystanders' sling shots). The ten pieces remaining in spring were declared the winners, which in hindsight seems to negate the exploration of impermanency that a "happening" is based on. This paradox aside, the ambience of the exhibit is revealed by the final two paragraphs of the Craft Horizons review of the show:

The whole occurrence of the exhibit had certain merits above those encountered in more traditional exhibitions. There was something spiritually appropriate in the implication of the pot returning to the earth, of artists participating physically in the installation of their own exhibit, and of creative man being, for a short time at least, really one with his work, the earth from which it was fashioned, and the elements that besiege both.

The whole idea was a joyful denial of the notion that art is a precious commodity of greater importance than the nature of man. It was instead a positive affirmation that the most important element in art is still man, his awareness that he himself is a part of his own environment, and his gutty coexistence with earth, air, fire,

and water.¹⁹



Left: "Unfired Clay" by Jim Cicansky (California), book size.
Many pieces, such as this one, arrived at the exhibition site broken.
Right: "Earth Link" by Robert Arneson (California),
constructed by Lowell Darling. A hole, 48" x 24" x 2", was dug in the ground,
and then the depression was filled with air-floated Kentucky Ball Clay.

[Fig.6: Jim Cicansky, Unfired Clay, Robert Arneson, Earth Link,
1970, in Craft Horizons (Oct 1970).]

Here we see clearly the relationship to Earth Art sculptors: spiritual reunion with nature, artist's participation, refusal of art as a commodity, a reuniting of work and nature. In 1972 in Amsterdam, a clay event took place: in a room that was cold at one end and hot at the other,

¹⁹Evert Johnson, "Two Happenings at Southern Illinois University: 1/Clay Unfired," Craft Horizons 30 (October 1970): 36-39.

Jim Melchert videotaped the interactions of four participants that had dunked their heads in slip. Titled Changes, the clay at either end of the room dried at different rates, affecting the "interpersonal reactions of the participants."²⁰



[Fig.7: Jim Melchert, Changes, 1972, in Clark and Hughto, A Century of Ceramics in the United States.]

In 1973 Dale Gaynor's bitumous adobe appeared in the Scripps Annual in California. Paul Soldner, who organized the show, termed it "the freshest idea in clay that I had seen for a long time."²¹ Throughout 1974-75, clay began to be used in the many movements practiced at the

²⁰Garth Clark and Margie Hughto, A Century of Ceramics in the United States: 1878-1978 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), p. 198.

²¹Dextra Frankel, "Scripps Ceramic Annual 1973," Craft Horizons 33 (April 1973): 54.

time. Roger Sweet, a former student of John Mason at the University of California at Irvine, displayed a mud wasp nest and lightning fused sand in the 1974 "California Ceramics and Glass at Oakland." In 1976 he was billed "A Conceptual Ceramic Artist" for his "Clay Artifacts," works such as a Atomic Glaze . . . Test, a packaged work of silica fused by the first atomic bomb blast. He then displayed molded canvases that had been pressed between slabs of clay, not unlike Alan Sonfist's Aging Canvas of 1967-68. Sonfist is known for "nature as Artifact" works such as Army Ants (1972), a display of the Panamanian army ants society, and Running Dead Animal (1973), a dead opossum encased in plaster; natural fluids migrated to the plaster surface after a short time.²²

In a 1974 Artweek, Sharon Hare's unfired/fired floor sculpture appears opposite an article on Michael Heizer, which is about the Earth Art sculptors recent gallery-oriented work.²³ In 1971, clay artist/sculptor Charles Simonds filmed a performance piece titled Birth, in which he rose from being buried in a clay pit. Best known for his unfired clay micro-scale villages with macrocosmic overtones, he has worked all over the world and in many major museums building his pieces on site in galleries as well as on busy city streets. He has been exhibited with Roger Morris, Dennis Oppenheim and Alan Sonfist at "Interventions in Landscape" at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,

²²Robert Joseph Horvitz, "Nature as Artifact: Alan Sonfist," Artforum 12 (November 1973): 32-35; Jacqueline Levering, "Roger Sweet, Will Lucke", Artweek, 28 June 1975, p. 4.

²³Elyse Katz Flier and Diane Gelon, "Floor Art"; Elena Karina Canavier, "Michael Heizer," Artweek 16 March 1974, p. 4.

a "meaningful follow up" to the Boston Museum's Show "Earth, Air, Fire, Water: Elements of Art" in 1974.²⁴ When reviewing Simonds' showings, an including / excluding mechanism becomes apparent. Having entered the scene as a sculptor, his work was shown and enforced as "art" outside ceramic conventions. Though he generally works in unfired clay, his work is endorsed without regard to the validity of medium; a valuable lesson to ceramicists of any school.



[Fig.8: Charles Simonds, in Simonds and Lippard, Cracking, (Koln: Walther Konig, 1979)].

"CLAY," a exhibition which took place in Los Angeles in 1974, was one of several landmark events in that area for unfired clay. Works by

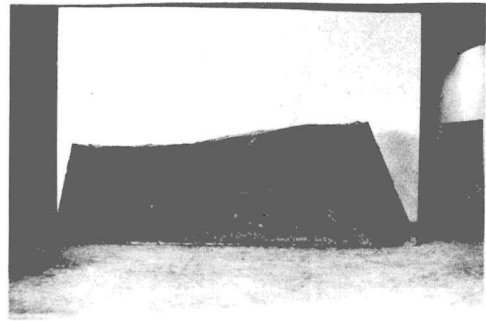
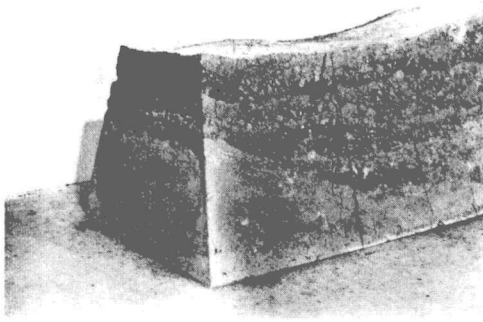
²⁴Edgar J. Driscoll Jr., "Back to Nature," Artnews 73 (September 1974): 80-81.

Robert Senour, Matt Perri, and large fired works by Roger Sweet and Larry Shep were part of this show. The latter two participated in the Los Angeles Institute for Contemporary Art's totally unfired exhibition ("the best show LAICA has done"), "Clay Works in Progress." An excerpt from Peter Plagens' review notes:

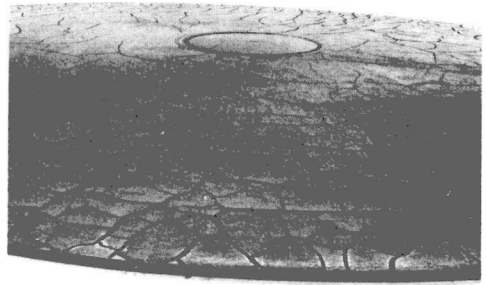
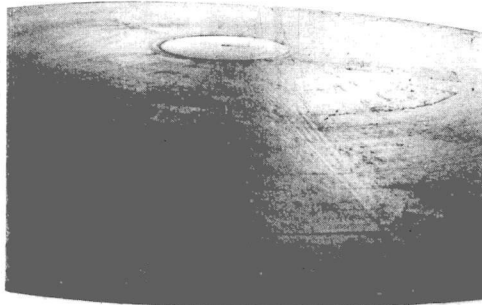
The piece de resistance is LARRY SHEP's big pie, a fat oval slip poured/spread out on the floor; as the exhibiton continues, the thing shrinks, cracking like the hot side of Mercury. Is that it? Sure, that's it, and with deft placement, and crisp format to begin with, that's enough. TOM McMILLIN's "rammed earth piece" comes close to Shep's; a trapezoidal solid of variously composed layers of earth, glued as it were with adobe clay. Its ongoing erosion is supposed to say something about "pollution and destruction to life around the continental shelf" eventually affecting "all life on earth" - a sentiment most likely sincerely felt, but scarcely effective propaganda in this form. It's much better as a piece of sculpture which inadvertently says the big diggings for the Foothill Freeway are beautiful if you look at 'em right. GEORGE GEYER's work is the pleasant middle run of the show's overall tenor ... [According to Geyer] "The 'water tank pieces' exhibit the subtle changes clay goes through as water effects it over a period of time. The clay partializes and slakes quickly in the first couple of days...." And so on. The other two artists, TOM COLGROVE and ROGER SWEET make, respectively, a sheet of glass buttressed by damp, piled clay which gradually collapses, allowing the glass to open, and steel-banded plaster box molds which allow the contained slip ot leak at different rates and, subsequently, form dry, peeling "puddles" on the floor.

You can't help notice, however, that all this didacticism, so instructionally innocent of post-Minimal pretensions, just happens to look a lot like Laddie Dill, Keith Sonnier, John Mason, and, if anyone, Robert Smithson. Is the "behavior of clay" demo just a cover for another spate of derivative Process sculpture, or are copies of The New Avant-Garde getting slipped in with teachers' copies of Craft Horizons? A little of both, I think, and I wish they'd not be so ashamed of the former. What the hell's wrong with an out-front "Smithson taught us that the raw stuff could be good-looking sculpture, so we went out and made some more"? "Clay Works" is good enough to stand as "Five Sculptors," period. It's even solid notice that LAICA is now the sole serious noncommercial museum-quality contemporary art operation in the whole damned basin. If it's environmental activism we want, that battle's out there with the 'dozers, and maybe that's where the counter-offensive art ought to be too.²⁵

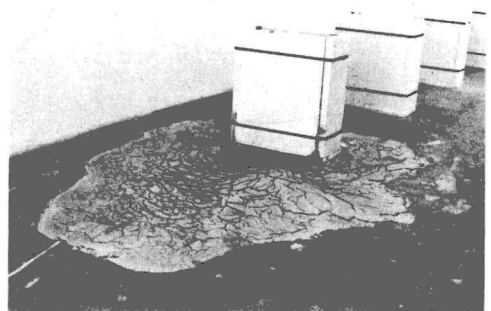
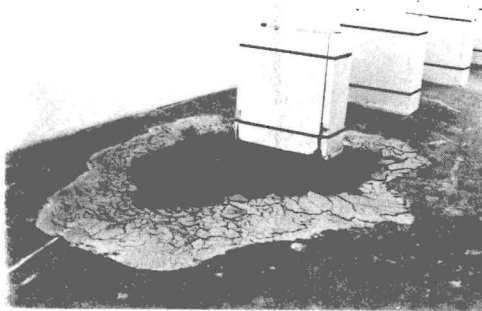
²⁵Peter Plagens "Reviews," Artforum 14 (October 1975): 73-74.



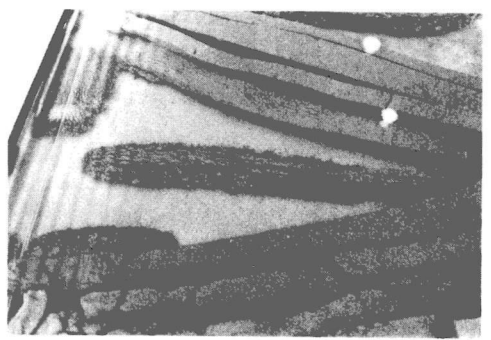
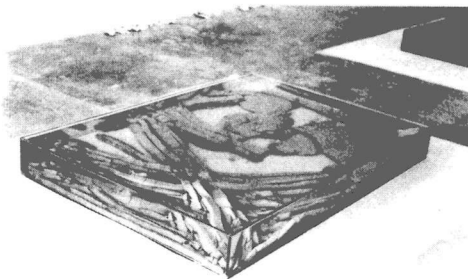
Tom McMillin, *Continental Shelf*, 1975, rammed earth, 6' x 16' x 6'



Larry Shep, *Adobe Pi*, 1975, adobe, 25' diameter.



Roger Sweet, *Slip Molds*, 1975, m/m, 33" x 27 1/2" x 11"



George Geyer, *Slake*, 1975, glass, clay and water, 6" x 60" x 42"

[Fig.9: Works from "Clay Works in Progress," Artforum 14 (October 1975): 73-74.

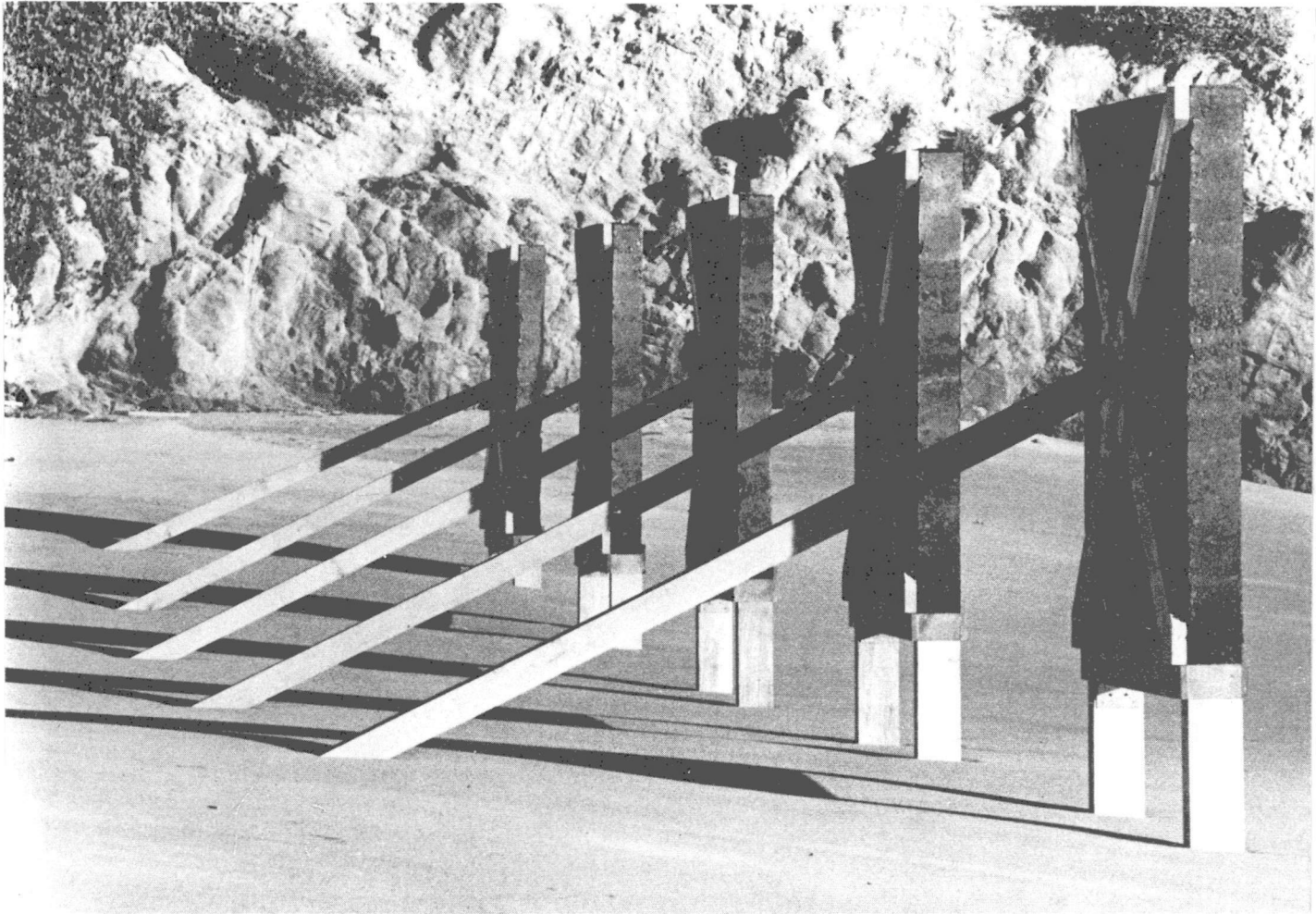
Again, this was derived from the influence of the movements in other areas of art, such as the Process works by Dieter Rot and Newton Harrison; but it was a rare event for an entire show to be based on

process alone, so here we see clay making advances beyond the confines of "ceramics." Unfired clay turned up elsewhere surrounding this show: in Joe Soldate's and Victor Citrin's pieces of the 1975 "Cerritos Ceramics Annual" (California); in Jamie Rassmussen's slip-covered floor disturbed by gallery traffic ("Ceramic Conjunction," 1976, California); at the "Definition Clay L.A." show in 1977; at the National Conference for Education in the Ceramic Arts Conference in 1978 (John Goodheart's Axial Plane).

In the late 1970's, Bill Farrell's clay and latex works figured in the forming of The Art Institute of Chicago as a Conceptualist clay center. The clay remains moist because of the latex coating, retaining its manipulability to a certain degree. Other artists occasionally used unfired clay, such as Don Reitz (Wisconsin), a long-time member of the ceramics movement, who did some large unfired works in a Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania gallery in 1980. Most prominent in the show were two large suspended slabs; most interesting was the break from tradition after a long career in firing. Meanwhile, George Geyer and Tom McMillan began working together, culminating in the "Documentation as Art, Art as Documentation" Show in 1979 in Los Angeles. They later combined their energies again, spawning new excitement in the process / conceptual / earthwork / ceramic world with a piece that made the cover of Ceramics Monthly in October 1981: Surflin Erosion, a work on the California shoreline. "Shrinking, cracking and eroding, clay is alive and unfired in Los Angeles" began the article in the issue.²⁶ Ceramics Monthly had

²⁶Elain Levin, "George Geyer, Tom McMillin: New Definitions," Ceramics Monthly 29 (October 1981): 51.

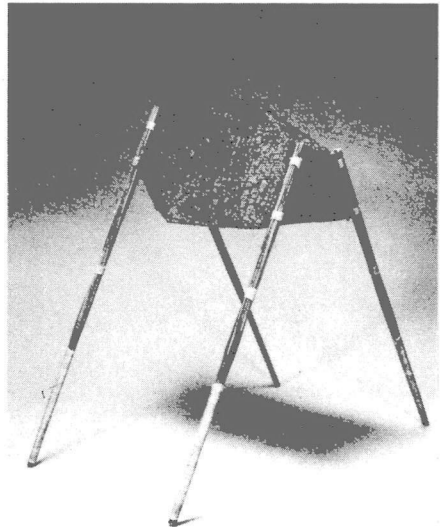
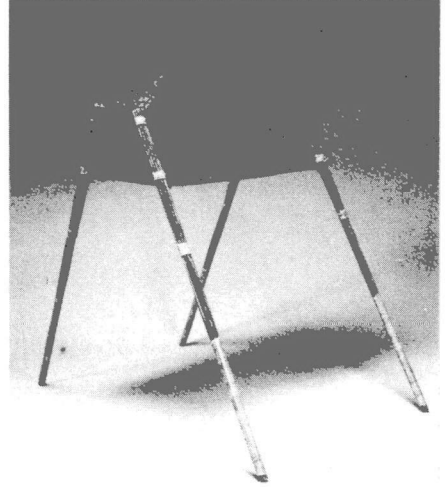
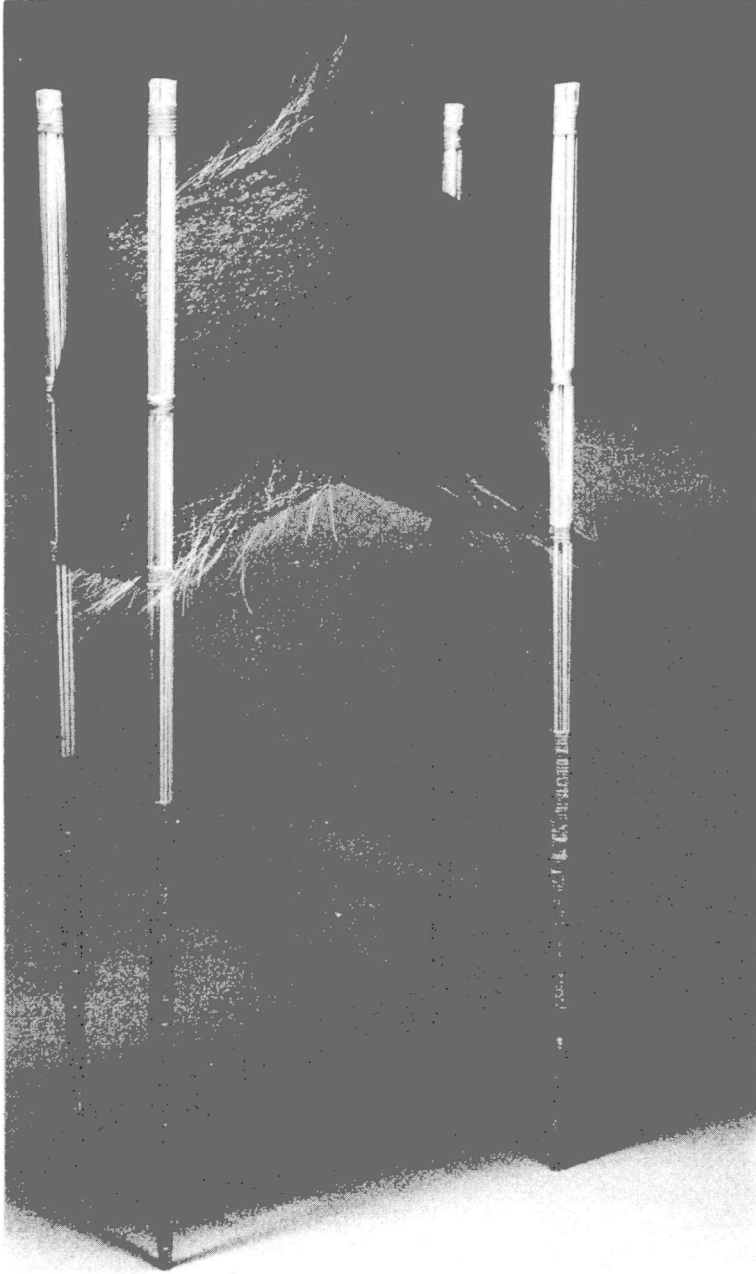
been continually open to works that transcended the fired tradition, but never before had it sported the cover of the widely read publication.



[Fig.10: George Geyer, Tom McMillan, Surflin Erosion, 1981, in Ceramics Monthly 29 (October 1981): 53.]

Unfired clay in the 1980's has played a part in the ceramics movement as a whole. The breaking of the convention of firing has dominoed to other conventions as well, and the recent movement has been back to gallery-oriented pieces and installations. There are people throughout the United States working with unfired clay in all forms, such as Howard Shapiro, who works primarily with clay's ability to become airborne when dried. He walks or sweeps through powdered clay in

silence, emphasizing frenetic, gestural activity; slowly the clay begins to float, obscuring him and his surrounding from view, transforming the atmosphere, dissolving form. As he leaves the scene, the dust slowly settles, and forms evolve from the shield of clay. Joyce Kohl mixes asphaltum with adobe to build monumental works. They play off organic and geometric forms, and have the ancient presence of prehistory.



[Fig.11: Katherine Ross, Gambrel (left), Coffer
in Ceramics Monthly 30 (November 1982): 47.]

Katherine Ross is concerned with shelter, sustenance, and everyday objects. Inspired by the walls of early adobe buildings, she uses clay

stabilized with dextrin over steel or bronze wire mesh, as well as many other materials, such as horsehair, bamboo and palm. Her structures derive from basic human needs; those illustrated are only 18-22 inches in height, though she is also known for large-scale installations.

In Australia, Mitsuo Shoji, Hossein Valamanesh, Virginia Hollister, and Nigel Helyer are presently using unfired clay in various ways in their work. Shoji often works with the figure in relation to natural cycles and processes; Valamanesh's works emanate a balance of inner/outer and simplicity/complexity; Hollister is known for using clay in photographs; and Helyer does installations using rammed, dry or wet earth to allude to rites of passage. In the work of all these people, unfired work is brought to expressive, immediate terms, generating layers of meaning. Clay has also figured in environmental works such as those of Marr Grounds in the outback, and its use in Aboriginal painting in the form of pigments cannot be overlooked.

In Japan, the Sodeisha Group has been active in avant-garde ceramics since 1948. Formed by Yagi Kazuo, Suzuki Osamu, and Yamada Hikaku, it was based at Kyoto University.²⁷ Sculptural works have dominated their ceramic approach, with unfired clay playing part in installation and site works. Hideto Satonaka has done such things as covering gallery walls in slip and letting the public interact with that environment, while site work such as that of Shiro Hayami has also become prevalent.

²⁷Yoshiaki Inui, "Sodeisha Philosophy," Sodeisha Avant-Garde Japanese Ceramics (Sydney: Australian Gallery Directors Council, 1979); Jackie Menzies, Contemporary Japanese Ceramics (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1981).

Gradually, unfired clay has gained deserved recognition, evolving from its humble beginnings in utensils, toys and shelter. As exemplified by Earthwork and process artists, it is often more directly accepted as "art" in these channels than in ceramic contexts. Those who wish to work unfired within a ceramic discipline are often still belabored with questions of functionality and permanence; even the art / craft debate rises to the occasion. The very term "unfired" seems to stress a path not taken, rather than a conscious, positive decision on the part of the artist. However, presently in the ceramic movement a dynamic environment prevails: the vessel, exclusive to pottery heritage; the figure; conceptual work; the return of patterning; process works; gallery, public and environmental works. Certainly in such a receptive climate, unfired clay has gained a foothold.

At the time of "A Century of Ceramics in the United States" Show in 1979, Garth Clark responded to the unfired works of the seventies as "soft-core Conceptualism," "never pertinent to art at large, coming years after the main thrust of conceptual sculpture," though he noted its emancipating effect on ceramics in general.²⁸ In the 1980's, this liberation is being actualized, as the field of ceramics sheds the band wagon mentality that new movements in other disciplines generate. The use of unfired clay has grown from its object-making and architectural roots to be revived by movements strongly located within the art world, Earthworks and Conceptualism. Now that the foundation is formed, it can operate free of the constraints of the earlier decades, and function

²⁸Clark and Hughto, A Century of Ceramics, pp. 198-99.

as integrated and contributing to art and ceramics rather than as an appendage. Sought after by collectors, recent ceramic work is broadening its audience, breeching the incestuousness of a medium-dictated art form while cultivating aspects exclusive to it, such as the vessel. Clark spoke of the need in ceramics for a "revolutionary voice"²⁹; unfired clay not only has that voice, but an ancient voice that makes it a viable art form in ceramic and therefore human history.

²⁹Ibid., p. 206.

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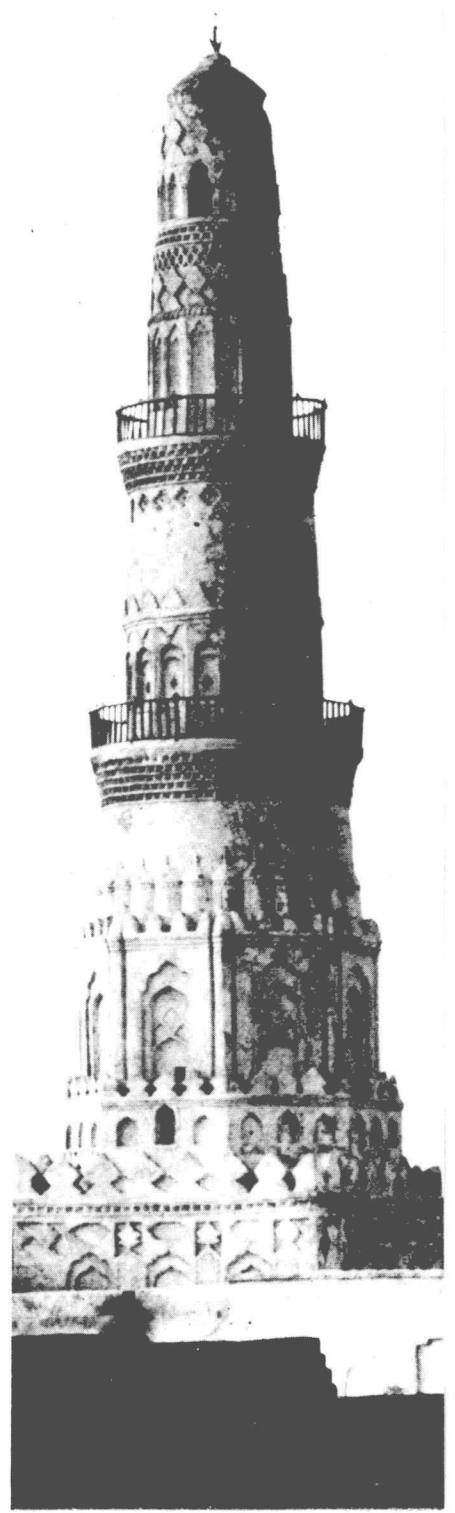
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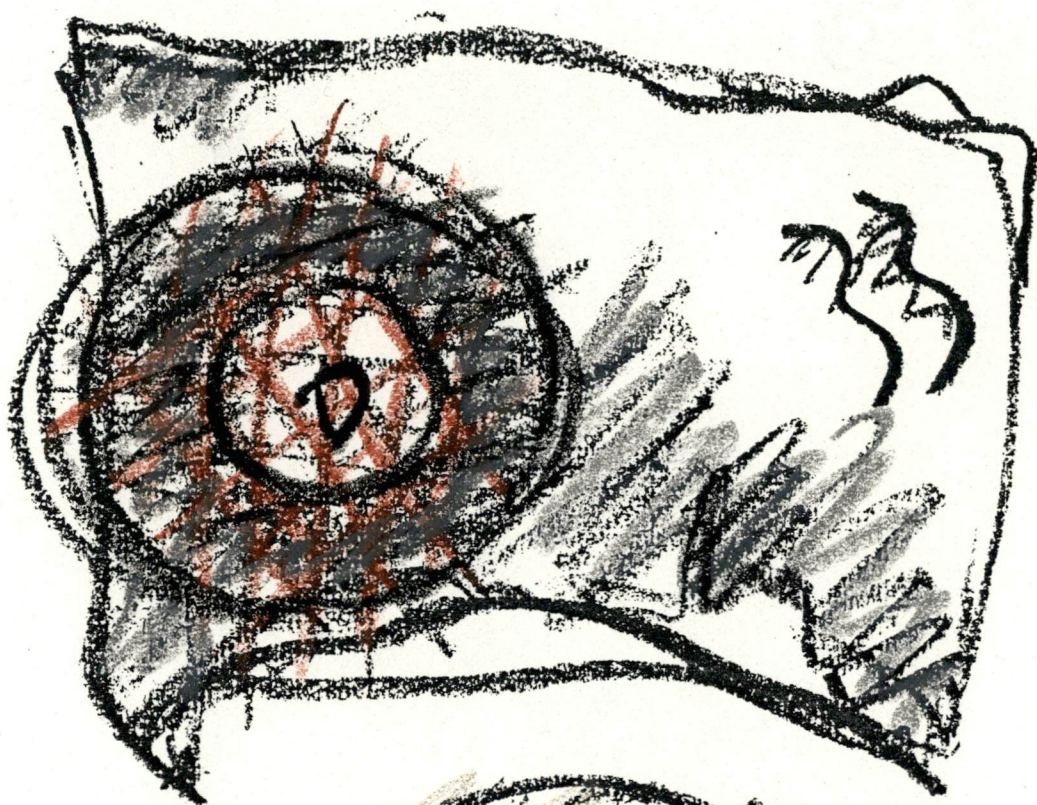
WORK AND PROCESS: EARLY 1984

The artwork produced in the earlier part of 1984 established the ideas which were worked with for the remainder of the course. From undergraduate training in America, I had developed an interest in cycles of formation/deterioration, especially in relation to belief systems. Through process-works completed at that time, my interests became centred specifically on decay; primarily, decay of architectural "monuments" that would point up deterioration in the ideology responsible for the existence of the form itself. Choosing forms recognizable as power-oriented to denote this idea, I employed the gothic arch, the tower, and to some extent, the arena as departure points for production.

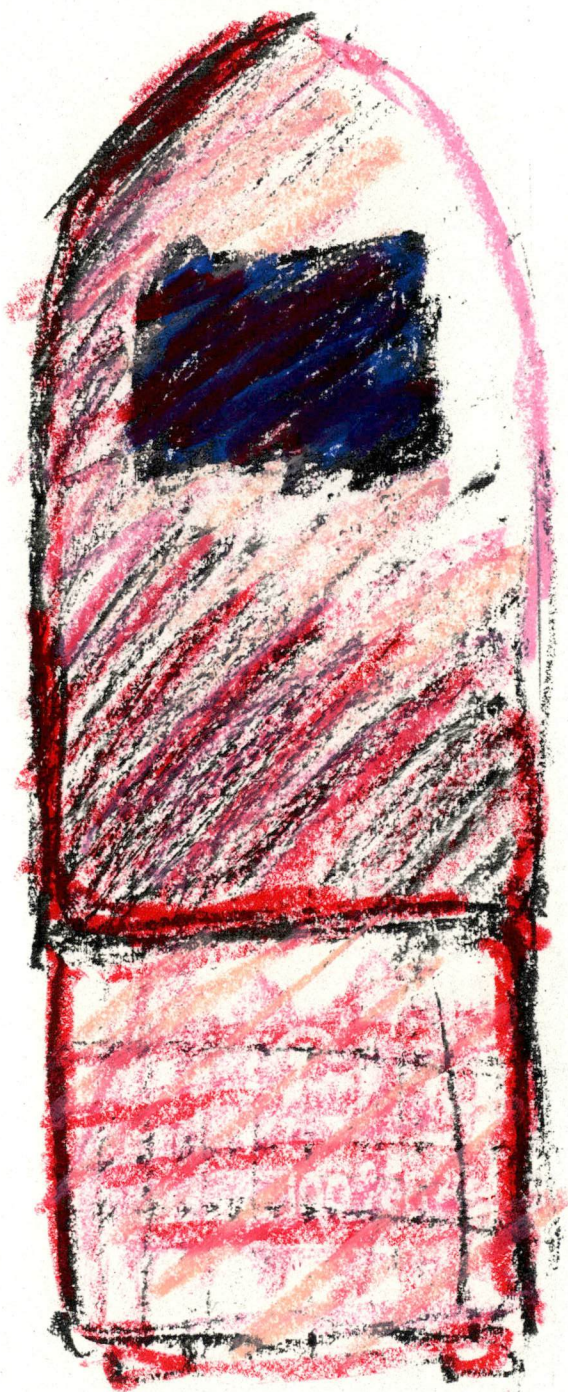
Also established at this time was the use of found objects, especially those of a totemic quality. They facilitated suggesting a quasi-religious focus or "punctum" to the work, visually grounding the pieces as having a reference beyond mere architectural decay, into a decay of a belief system. The sacred connotations of some architecture became of great interest, as these forms seemed especially poignant when decayed. With this strengthened concern at the forefront, several new materials were employed, such as grass, paper, and hessian.

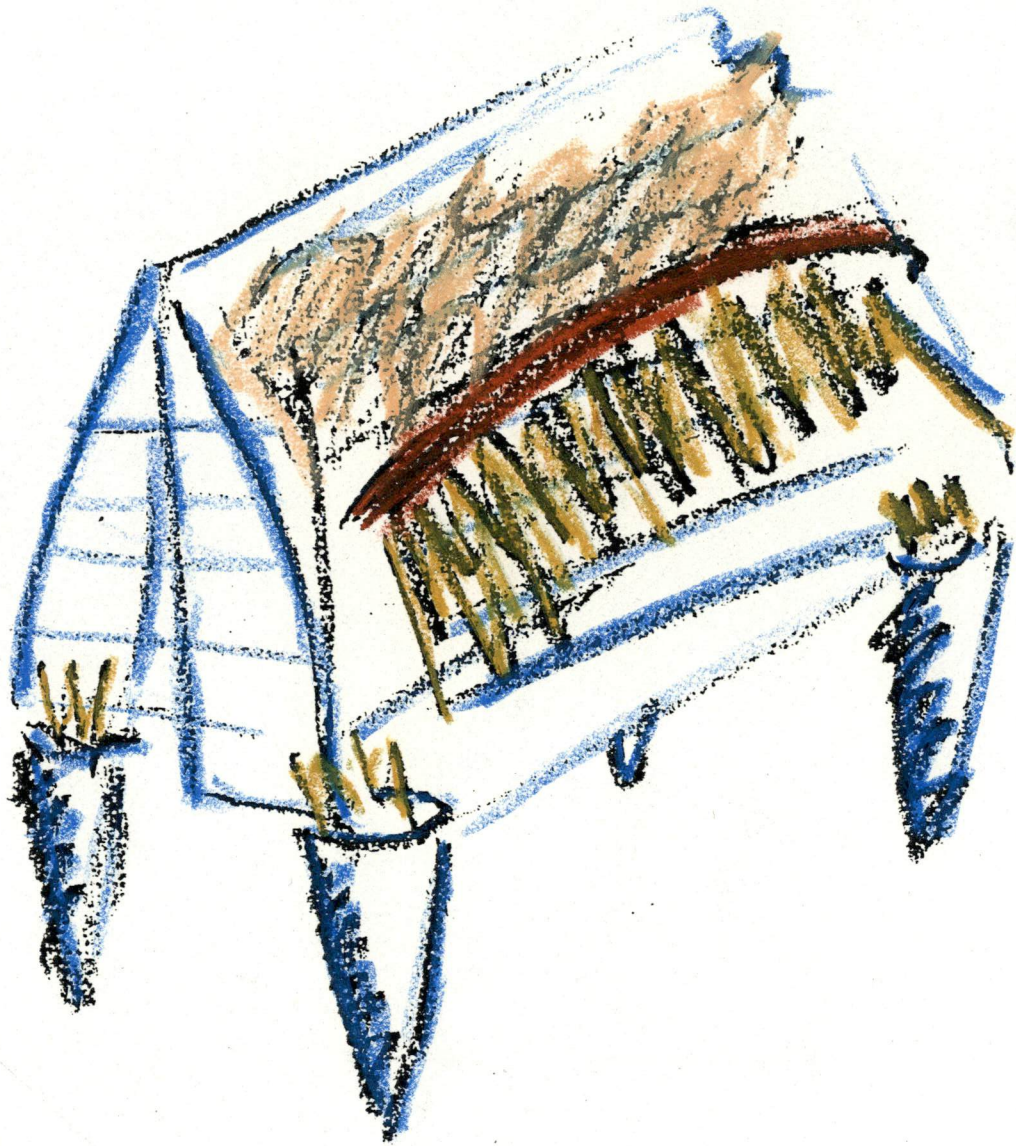


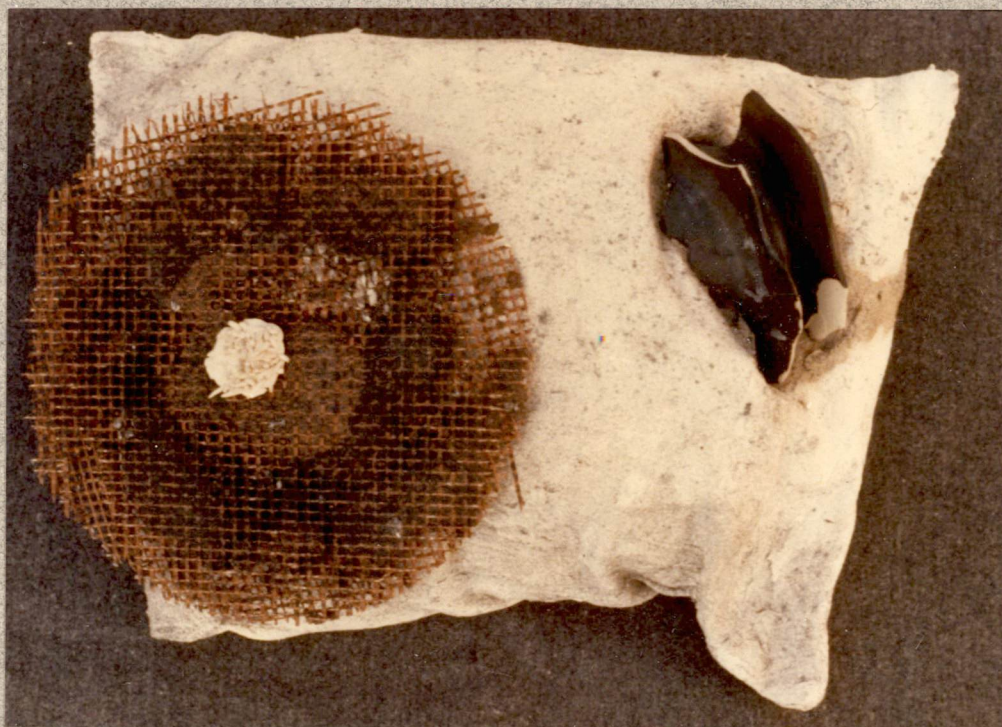
Adobe minarets in Afghanistan, South and North Yemen, in Jean Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: and old idea, a new future (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981).



Pivotum - placement crucial





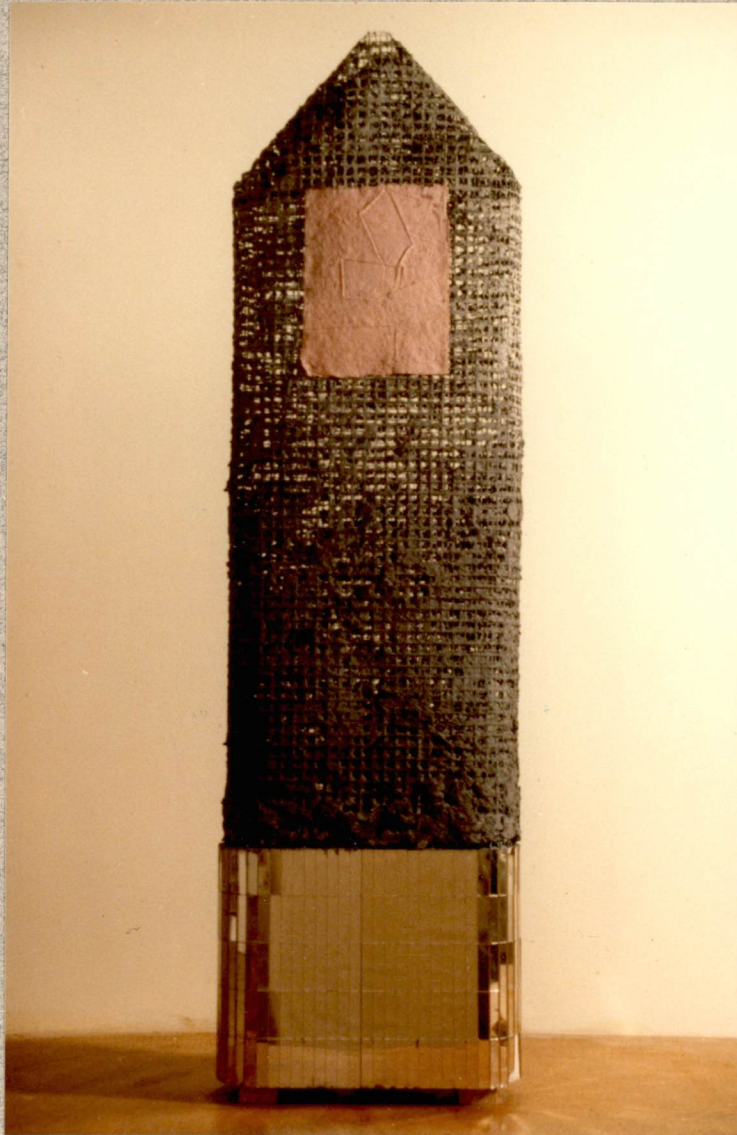


Untitled Pillow

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Mixed Media

1984

42x32x14 cm (17x13x5½")

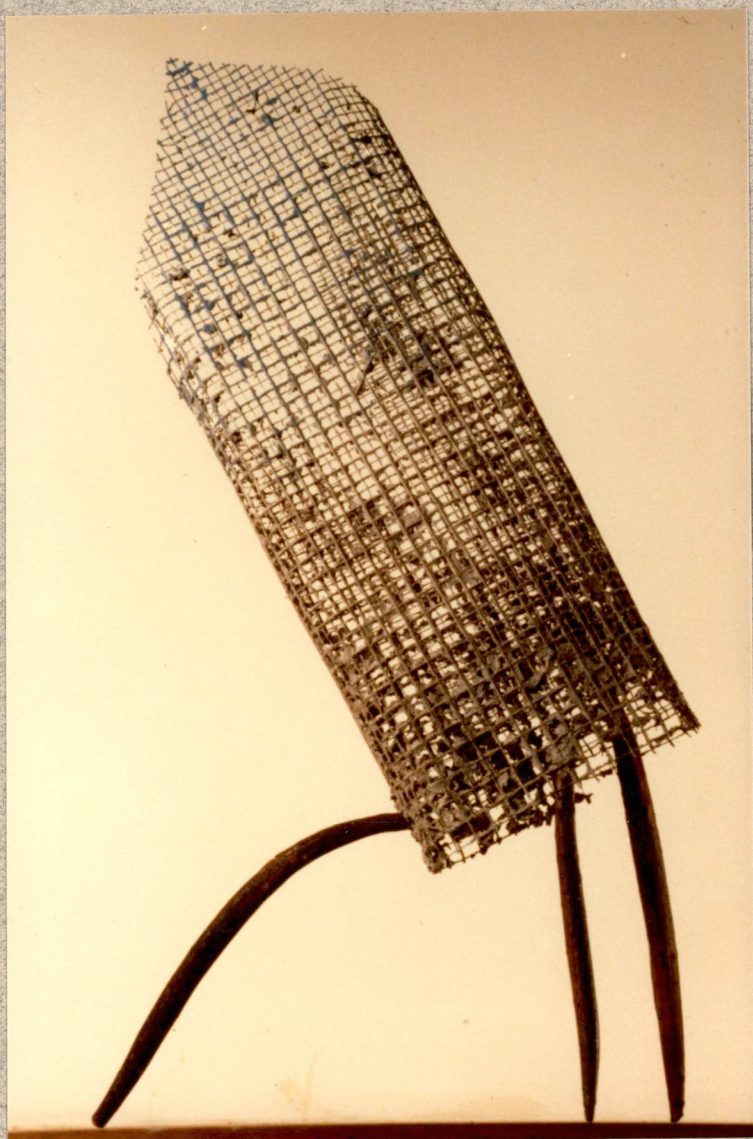


Edifice Complex

Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wood, Wire,
Mirrored Base.

1984

120 cm (47") High



Mangrove Hotel

Stabilized Raw Clay, Wire, Mangrove Seeds
Paint. 1984 65 cm (25½") High



Paleograph: Arena

Stabilized Raw Glaze, Wood, Wire. 1984
46 cm (16") High

CERAMIC CONFERENCE AND ART FORUM PAPER

UNCOMMON EARTH:
Unfired Clay in Art and History

Paper presented to the
4th National Ceramics Conference,
University of Melbourne, May 1985,

and the
Tasmanian School of Art,
"The Raw Edge" Art Forum, July 1985.

FOREWORD

This paper is an abbreviated version of the first seminar paper. It was presented to the Fourth National Ceramic Conference at Melbourne University, May 13 - 18th, 1985, to which I was appointed the State Representative of Tasmania for a session entitled "Student Forum." It was also presented to the Tasmanian School of Art as part of an Art Forum Program entitled "The Raw Edge," taking place on July 5, 1985.

"The Raw Edge" Forum also included Nigel Helyer, Joyce Kohl, and Susan Wechsler. Nigel Heyler is a Sydney based sculptor, and head of Sculpture at Sydney College of the Arts; Joyce Kohl is an artist working in adobe, and teaching at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; Susan Wechsler teaches at Parsons School of Design in New York. Topics discussed included historical and modern aspects of unfired clay as an art-making material, as well as its relevance to broader movements in art.

For both of these occasions slides were also provided, some of which are pictured in the text of the first seminar paper; they are not repeated here.

UNCOMMON EARTH

Historians theorize that the discovery of clay becoming rock-like when exposed to high temperatures was a case of pure serendipity. A piece of clay was formed by hand and left close to a camp fire, only to be rediscovered as "fired" in the cooling ashes. Durable enough for functional ware, permanent enough for sculpture, fired clay has been the norm in the production of ceramics for centuries. But in certain times and places, these norms have been disregarded for two reasons: firstly, fuel was either too expensive or inaccessible, or the clay form too large, as in some architecture; secondly, there has been a continuing tradition of those who prefer to leave their clay unfired. Within recent ceramic history, the second group has been small if not nonexistent: it took the advent of the Earth Art sculptors to renew the status of unfired clay as an art-making material, and slowly it has regained acceptance in the ceramic as well as the art world.

Often located simultaneously within sculptural and ceramic disciplines, unfired forms have strong ties in functional and non-functional object making and architecture. Before the discovery of firing, simple mud was used for lining baskets, cooking surfaces, and building shelter. Highly accessible and easily worked, mud and clay have been a valuable material for thousands of years, a fact now gaining appreciation in many galleries the world over. To better understand ancient mud artifacts,

the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University launched a study in Southern Iraq, where mud objects are still produced in much the same manner and for the same functions as they were four and a half millennia ago.¹ Other than its use for architecture in the region, sun dried mud objects are employed for cooking, toy making and jewelry by the Hadij, a Bedouin tribe. Unbaked utensils are ideal for these nomadic people, as they can be left at one camp and reproduced at the next. In fact, mud utensils are broken before embarking for the new location.

Architecture of adobe or pise is perhaps the most well-known use of unfired clay, as it presently houses one third of the world's population.² One of the earliest building materials, it is thought to date to the Neolithic period (10,000 to 3000 B.C.).³ Some familiar earth structures of antiquity include Jericho, the oldest known city; parts of the Great Wall of China, which date from the third century B.C.; and the 90 meter Tower of Babel, from the seventh century B.C. Virtually every continent has an example of the architectural use of unbaked earth, and with the onset of the energy crisis, adobe architecture experienced a revival, especially in the American Southwest. As neutral temperatures are maintained indoors year round, earth homes have become recognized as sound investments. New materials have been added for extra

¹Edward Ochsenchlager, "Mud Objects from al-Hiba," Archaeology 27 (1974): 162.

²Jean Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: an old idea, a new future (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), p. 7.

³Paul Wencil Brown and James R. Clifton, "Adobe 1: The Properties of Adobe," Studies in Conservation 23 (1978): 139-140.

stabilization, such as asphaltum, and modern exterior coverings are now often used, such as a thin layer of concrete over wire mesh. For many years, European pise has set the precedent for the use of earth in damper climates by making the first course of stone to protect the building from standing water. A new appreciation has been found there for unfired architecture, inspiring the exhibition "Des Architectures de Terre" at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris in 1981-82, and Jean Dethier's related book on ancient and modern adobe use.⁴

Recently, an interesting technique was pioneered by Nader Kahlili in Iran. After observing the effects of extreme weather conditions on native adobe desert villages, he devised a way of firing houses, a process called geltaftan. Buildings are made kiln-like by blocking doors and windows, then burning ports are placed, employing existing chimneys as flues for the kerosene firing. Little or no wooden support is used and the cost is roughly one third that of conventional architecture.⁵

Few ancient examples of raw clay sculpture survive, but it can be surmised that mud and clay were often used in early sculpting, just as in utensils and small objects. In 1972 the Caballo Muerto complex was excavated in Coastal Peru. Occupied by the Cupisnique people in the early centuries of the first millenium B.C., it is entirely constructed of adobe, consisting of architectural ruins, sculptural heads, zoomorphic and standing figures. Because of their growing relationship with the natural world, large outdoor sculpture such as this became a form of human

⁴Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture.

⁵Jim Danisch, "Nader Khalili: Fired Houses," Ceramics Monthly 31 (November 1983): 50-54.

reverence for nature and gods alike. Numerous stone examples still exist, in such familiar forms as Stonehenge and Easter Island, but many works directly made of earth also remain, such as the Serpent Mound in Ohio, which dates from 1000 B.C. - 700 A.D. In the late 1960's it was sites such as these that inspired the work of the Earth Art sculptors. Feeling the contemporary art market imposed a capitalist structure that alienated maker from made and art from life, artists left the galleries to mend the break between nature and spirit. They worked in performance, installation and site sculpture, becoming "major protagonists of their art ideas", striving to "reinvest art with meaning."⁶ In the United States, many Earth Art sculptors ventured to the Southwestern deserts, where the "illusion of return after devastation appeared complete."⁷

The Earth art sculptors made their mark not only outdoors, but in the gallery as well. Some explored the extremes of public and non-public works, while many also worked within the gallery environment. For example, Walter De Maria's "New York Earth Room," is a permanent occupant of 141 Wooster Street, New York City (two similar rooms were exhibited in Munich and Darmstadt, Germany). The 3,600 square feet of earth weighing 280,000 pounds is just a lift ride away from the bustle below.⁸ One comes in out of the sounds and smell of the city to be confronted with the damp humus and minimalistic silence of the room; an example, perhaps, of Jack Burnham's concept of the artist as shaman,

⁶Lucy R. Lippard, "Gardens: Some Metaphors for a Public Art," Art in America 69 (November 1981): 137-38.

⁷Paul Shepard, Man in the Landscape, quoted by Lippard, "Gardens: Some Metaphors", p. 138.

⁸"New York Earth Room," Ceramics Monthly 28 (September 1980): 61.

"[drawing] people away from substitute objects and back towards the ancient memories of life and productivity."⁹

People working in clay began to see their medium turning up in museums and galleries, with no apparent prejudice as to what materials could be employed. In these other fields there was no "craft" barrier to leap, since the works were produced for a fine art audience. Concomitantly, ceramic sculptors broke down the conventions of the ceramic framework, and the interest in unfired clay was revived. Most who worked in clay at the time were well aware of adobe and its long history in architecture. Temporal conceptual works in sculpture and Earth art gave rise to an interest in clay as a process-oriented material, so most works of this time survive in documentation. One of the first recorded events was one of two "Happenings" at Southern Illinois University, the national open invitational "Unfired Clay Exhibition '70." Held entirely outdoors after a January snowstorm, the 62 entries were left after opening day to suffer the elements and interact with the environment. Participants included Nicholas Vergette, Robert Arneson, James Melchert, Jim Cicansky, Mags Harries, and David Gilhooly. The Craft Horizons review of the show marks an undeniable link to what the Earth Art sculptors were trying to achieve:

The whole occurrence of the exhibit had certain merits above those encountered in more traditional exhibitions. There was something spiritually appropriate in the implication of the pot returning to the earth, of artists participating physically in the installation of their own exhibit, and of creative man being, for a short time at least, really one with his work, the earth from which it was fashioned, and the elements that besiege both.

The whole idea was a joyful denial of the notion that art is a precious commodity of greater importance than the nature of man. It was instead a positive affirmation that the most important element in art is still man, his awareness that he himself is a part of his

⁹Jack Burnham, "The Artist as Shaman," Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art (New York: George Braziller, 1974), p. 144.

own environment, and his gutty coexistence with earth, air, fire, and water.¹⁰

Soon after this show, raw clay began to be the subject of many works. In 1972 in Amsterdam, Jim Melchert videotaped the interactions of four participants that had dunked their heads in slip, then made to sit in a room that was hot at one end and cold at the other. Titled Changes, the clay at either end of the room dried at different rates, affecting the "interpersonal reactions of the participants."¹¹ In 1973 Dale Gaynor's bitumous adobe appeared in the Scripps Annual in California. Paul Soldner, who organized the show, termed it "the freshest idea in clay that I had seen for a long time."¹² During 1974-75, clay took part in the many movements practiced at the time. Roger Sweet displayed a mud wasp nest and lightning fused sand in the 1974 "California Ceramics and Glass at Oakland." In 1976 he was billed "A Conceptual Ceramic Artist" for his "Clay Artifacts," works such as Atomic Glaze . . . Test, a packaged work of silica fused by the first atomic bomb blast. He then displayed molded canvases that had been pressed between slabs of clay, not unlike Alan Sonfist's Aging Canvas of 1967-68 (Sonfist is known for "nature as artifact" works such as the 1972 Army Ants, a display of the Panamanian army ant society).

In 1971, clay artist / sculptor Charles Simonds filmed a performance piece titled Birth, in which he rose from being buried in a clay pit. Best

¹⁰Evert Johnson, "Two Happenings at Southern Illinois University: 1/Clay Unfired," Craft Horizons 30 (October 1970): 36-39.

¹¹Garth Clark and Margie Hughto, A Century of Ceramics in the United States: 1878-1978 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), p. 198.

¹²Dextra Frankel, "Scripps Ceramic Annual 1973," Craft Horizons 33 (April 1973): 54.

known for his unfired clay micro-scale villages with macrocosmic overtones, he has worked all over the world and in many major museums building his pieces on site in galleries as well as on busy city streets. When reviewing Simonds' showings, an including / excluding mechanism becomes apparent. Having entered the scene as a sculptor, his work was shown and enforced as "art" outside ceramic conventions. Though he generally works in unfired clay, his work is endorsed without regard to the validity of medium; a valuable lesson to those in the ceramic "field."

"CLAY," a show taking place in Los Angeles in 1974, was one of several landmark events in that area for unfired clay. Participants were Robert Senour, Matt Perri, Roger Sweet and Larry Shep. The latter two also participated in the Los Angeles Institute for Contemporary Art's totally unfired show ("the best show LAICA has done"), "Clay Works in Progress." Again, this was derived from the influence of the movements in other areas of art, such as the process works by Dieter Rot and Newton Harrison; but it was a rare event for an entire show to be based on process alone, so here we see clay making advances beyond the confines of "ceramics." Unfired clay turned up elsewhere surrounding this show: in Joe Soldate's and Victor Citrin's pieces of the 1975 "Cerritos Ceramics Annual" (California); in Jamie Rassmussen's slip-covered floor disturbed by gallery traffic ("Ceramic Conjunction," 1976, California); at the "Definition Clay L.A." show in 1977; at the National Conference for Education in the Ceramic Arts Conference in 1978 (John Goodheart's Axial Plane).

In the late 1970's, Bill Farrell's clay and latex works figured in the forming of The Art Institute of Chicago as a Conceptualist clay center.

The clay remains moist because of the latex coating, retaining its manipulability to a certain degree. Meanwhile, George Geyer and Tom McMillan began combining their energies, and later spawned excitement in the ceramic world with the piece that made the cover of Ceramics Monthly in October 1981: Surflin Erosion, a work on the California shoreline. "Shrinking, cracking and eroding, clay is alive and unfired in Los Angeles" began the article in the issue.¹³ Ceramics Monthly had been continually open to works that transcended the fired tradition, but never before had it sported the cover of the widely read publication.

Unfired clay in the 1980's has played a part in the ceramics movement as a whole. There are people throughout the United States working with unfired clay in all forms, such as Howard Shapiro, who works primarily with the ability of clay to become airborne when dried. He walks or sweeps through powdered clay in silence, emphasizing frenetic, gestural activity; slowly the clay begins to float, obscuring him and his surroundings from view, transforming the atmosphere, dissolving form. As he leaves the scene, the dust slowly settles, and forms evolving from the shield of clay. Joyce Kohl mixes asphaltum with adobe to build monumental works. They play off organic and geometric forms, and have the ancient presence of prehistory. Katherine Ross is concerned with shelter, sustenance, and everyday objects. Inspired by the walls of early adobe buildings, she uses clay stabilized with dextrin over wire mesh, as well as many other materials, to form structures derived from basic human needs.

¹³Elain Levin, "George Geyer, Tom McMillin: New Definitions," Ceramics Monthly 29 (October 1981): 51.

In Australia, Mitsuo Shoji, Hossein Valamanesh, Virginia Hollister, and Nigel Heyler are presently using unfired clay in various ways in their work. Shoji often works with the figure in relation to natural cycles and processes; Valamanesh's works emanate a balance of inner / outer and simplicity / complexity; Hollister is known for using clay in photographs; and Heyler does installations using rammed, dry or wet earth to allude to rites of passage. In the work of all these people, unfired work is brought to expressive, immediate terms, generating layers of meaning. Clay has also figured in environmental works such as those of Marr Grounds in the outback, and its use in Aboriginal painting in the form of pigments cannot be overlooked. There is also considerable interest in raw clay works in Japan, where Hideto Satonaka has done such things as covering gallery walls in slip and letting the public interact with the changing environment.

At the time of "A Century of Ceramics in the United States" Show in 1979, Garth Clark responded to the unfired works of the seventies as "soft-core Conceptualism . . . never pertinent to art at large, coming years after the main thrust of conceptual sculpture," though he noted its emancipating effect on ceramics in general.¹⁴ The use of unfire clay has grown from its object-making and architectural roots to be revived by movements strongly located within the art world, Earthworks and Conceptualism. Now that the foundation is formed, it can operate free of the constraints of the earlier decades, and function as integrated and contributing to art and ceramics rather than as an appendage. Sought after by collectors, recent ceramics is broadening its audience, breeching

¹⁴Clark and Hughto, A Century of Ceramics, p. 198-99.

the incestuousness of a medium-dictated art form while cultivating aspects exclusive to it, such as the vessel. Clark spoke of the need in ceramics for a "revolutionary voice";¹⁵ unfired clay not only has that voice, but an ancient voice that locates it in ceramic and therefore human history.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 206.

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"COMMON EARTH: ALIVE AND UNFIRED"
EXHIBITION JUNE - JULY 1985

"The Raw Edge" Forum was concomitant to the exhibition "Common Earth: Alive and Unfired," which took place at the University of Tasmania Fine Arts Gallery from June 4 to July 5, 1985. The show brought together seven artists who work raw clay sculpture, and although more than half were originally from other countries, all were practicing in Australia at the time. These people were researched during the writing of the first seminar paper. The idea of having the exhibition was generated by Penny Smith, and was curated by Penny and myself. The show was generously funded by the Crafts Board of the Australia Council and the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board, through the Fine Art Gallery Committee, University of Tasmania. It included John Davis, Kay Gill, Nigel Helyer, Mitsuo Shoji, Hossein Valamanesh, Greg Wain, and myself. There are many who supported and helped in the conception and realization of the exhibition.

Most of the works were completed in situ at the gallery site, while John Davis and Greg Wain also did works in the light bushland around the Mt. Nelson Campus. Students of ceramics and sculpture alike contributed time and labor to the construction of the pieces, which took roughly two weeks to complete. Shoji often works with the figure in relation to natural cycles and processes; for "Common Earth" he completed a large human profile made of charred masonite, set in a square field of white

slip on the gallery floor. The slip curled and cracked during the show, becoming landscape-like and echoing the forms of the cut and sectioned blackened boards. Valamanesh's works emanate balance and visual harmony, often inticing the viewer into a calm and almost sacred space. Also working with the interactions of humans and nature, he supplied the gallery with adobe plaques engraved with his oversize fingerprint, suspended above a bundle of roots that were secured by elegant knots. Two other works of his were photographs of an earthwork of the large fingerprint, troweled in Adelaide soil. Kay Gill works with the concept of the house and shelter, a departure point for Greg Wain's constructions as well. Gill contributed two works, a tower and an small house on large stilts, brightly colored and not unlike the tentative abodes of tropic regions. Wain built three railroad sleeper and cement-clay forms, each carrying dual connotations construction/ruin, as well as pointing up the architectural juxtapositions one finds in a city that constantly builds on top of itself. Helyer, who often works with rights of passage, here made a large clay crown-covered in yellow pigment, containing a golden-faced king-cum-jester. Lit only from its interior, the work was viewed through cracks in the drying clay; coming close to the musty surface to peer inside, there was a contrasting distancing effect from the enclosed, enthroned king. My own work displayed my predilection with symbolically powerful architectural forms, such as the gothic arch and tower. One work contributed was an "eroded" clay edifice with a mirrored base, topped by a faded paper "sign"; the other was an inverted gothic, pod-like form, constructed of hessian and slip, then painted and suspended to cast a shadow on three similar unpainted forms nestled upright on the floor.

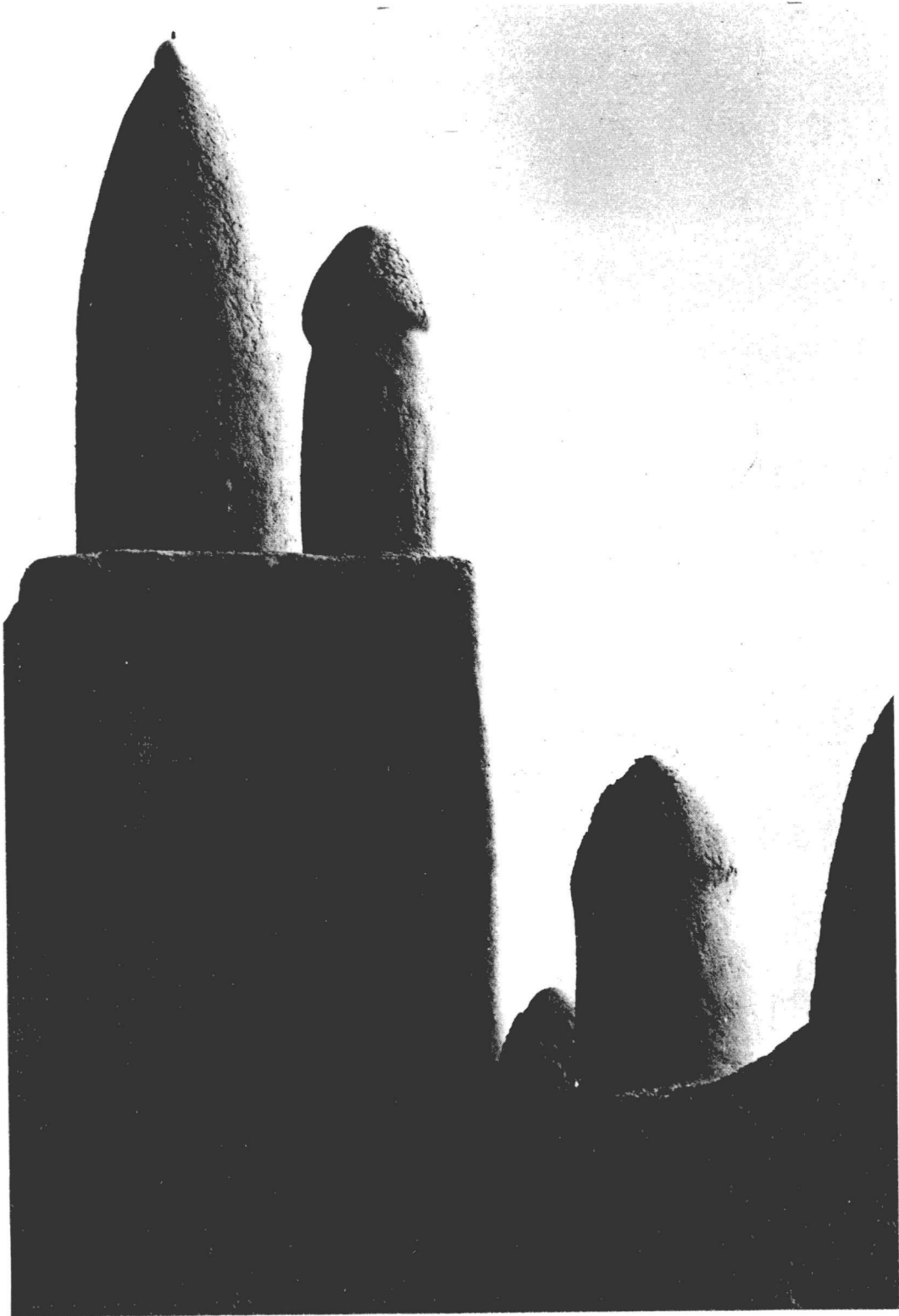
The catalogue for the exhibition is located in the back pocket of the documentation.

WORK AND PROCESS: 1984-85

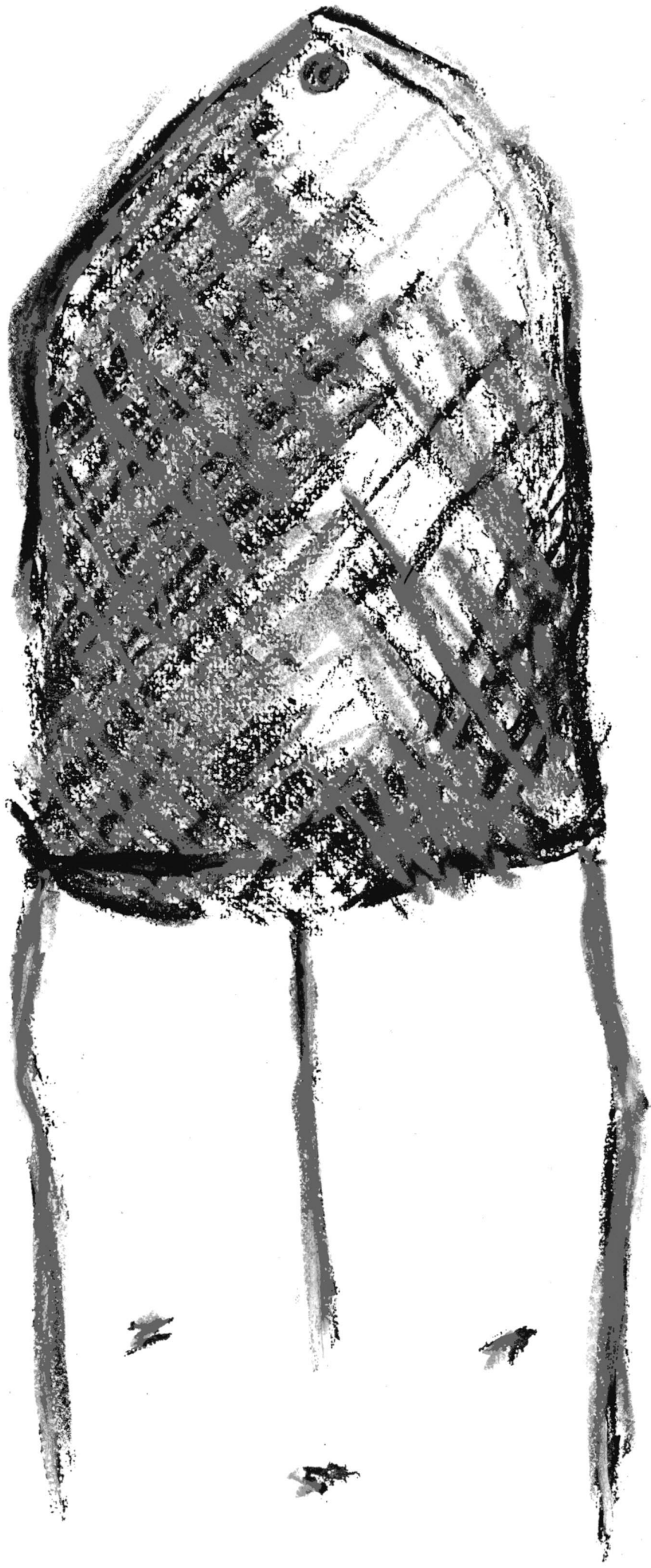
During this time the sacred connotations behind the architectural forms produced became of heightened importance. This was manifested in more attention to atmosphere, suspension of the work rather than being podium based, and the importance of lighting. Of the materials employed earlier, hessian seemed to offer a supreme reduction of surface richness, as the clay could be applied very thinly, and a dry, almost abraded surface achieved through paint. This emaciation made the entropic qualities of the work more evident. There was some concern voiced over the loss of the very tactile surface of cracked clay, but reduction in lavish formal qualities so that content could be dealt with more directly was the aim.

The work of this period is almost exclusively in the form of the gothic tower. This seemed to be the most succinct form worked with to date, so it was concentrated upon almost entirely, and used in many volumes, positions and permutations. Eventually it became so mutated that little or no architectural concern was evident; instead, I was working with totemic objects that supplied the viewer with an invented sacredness pointing to the instability of belief systems. I felt this concern central to all my work in the course, and working with this reduced form and surface helped to condense and stabilize these ideas, therefore increasing communication with the viewer.

It was around this time that it was pointed out the works had become phallic in form; this was an unintentional result, but nonetheless it existed and needed to be addressed. The mutation of the form of the gothic tower (especially in the works formed of hessian) became so anthropomorphic as to suggest some phallic concerns; although I felt this was a result of using inherently phallic forms such as the tower, I realized that it was a message the viewer was receiving too overtly for my purposes, and so tried to subvert these connotations by directing more importance back to the small found-object "punctums." The inherent phallicism of tower forms can be traced through history; much tribal or primitive architecture expounds on this, and in many cases, hope for fertility of land as well as humans is "built into" structures. Certainly, tall forms are power-oriented (whether it is in reference to fertility, physical relation to the average human height, or to keeping barnyard animals out of stored grain), and this was my main interest.

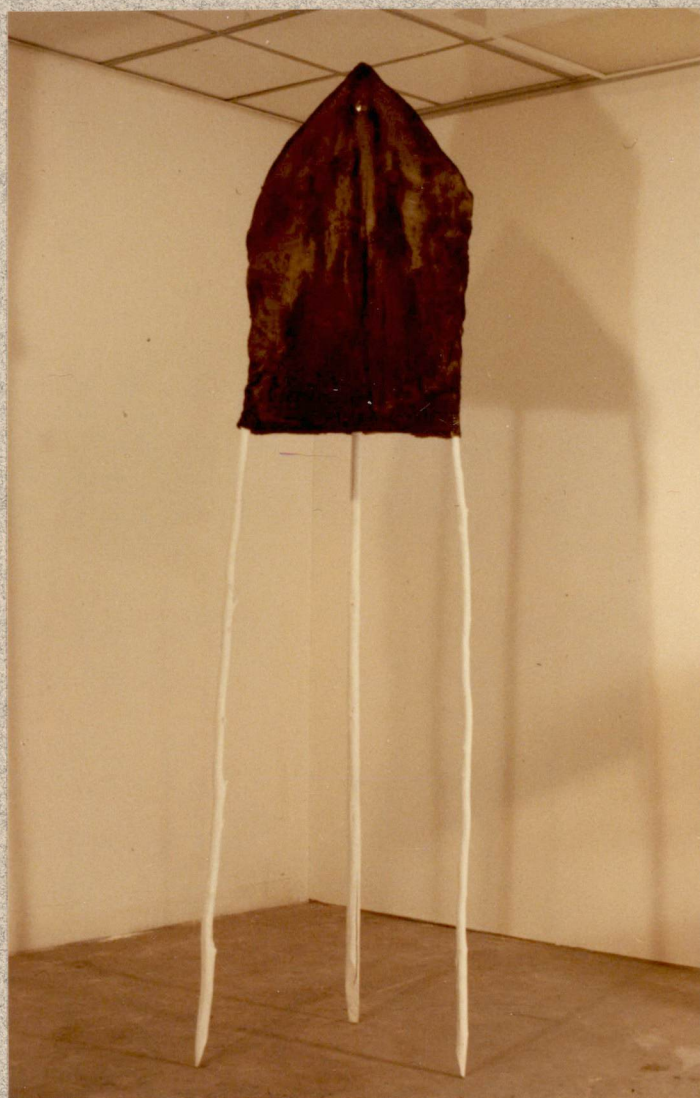


Sculptural elements in the mosque of Sangha, Dogon tribe, Mali, in Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: an old idea, a new future.









Early Stilt

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Wood, Metal,
Paint.
1984

264 cm (104") High



Reversed Monuments

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint, Metal
1985

100 cm (40") High



Animated Monument I

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint, Wire
Fired Clay, Paper, Plastic.
1985 120 cm (47") High without wire



Inverted Umbra

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint,
Metal. 1985
Large Piece - 104 cm (41") Long

SECOND SEMINAR PAPER

THE NATURE/CULTURE SCHISM

Second Year Masters Seminar
1985

FOREWORD

The questioning of the location of "Nature" within culture discussed in this work was brought about from the information acquired in the first seminar paper. In the documents read as research for "A Historical Review of Raw Clay," "Nature" was consistently used as analogous to goodness, or very often godliness, and so those who used earth materials for their artwork achieved some kind of relationship with nature that was quite impenetrable to others. This seemed to be especially true in the critical writing surrounding Earth Art, and seemed to be a buttress for the rationale of those working in clay, most notably in raw clay.

Early on in the formulation of the first paper, I had little ideological trouble with this view, having completed my undergraduate work in ceramics, where such a stance is often prevalent. But by the time the paper was completed, it became apparent that there were many more questions to be explored behind the art work studied: Why was "Nature" in such a position that one had to physically work in it to even comprehend it? Was that even enough, or could one never really come to terms with "Nature"? Does "Nature" really exist, or is it a cultural invention? This paper is an attempt to raise these questions and expose an answer to them, using the knowledge gained in the first paper as a springboard for exploration, and a firm belief in cultural relativism as an underpinning.

INTRODUCTION

The control and constructive use of fire was imperative to the rapid development of humankind. It delivered the species from nature into a culture so that it could keep warm, cook and store food in utensils of baked clay. Control of fire, therefore, delineated humans from beasts, a separation further advanced by the development of language. The formation of social groups effectively brought humans to a position in which nature was the source of raw material for their use, posing nature as an "other" that defined "culture" by differentiation.

In the four volumes of Mythologiques, Levi-Strauss used the example of cooked and raw food as a metaphor for nature being assimilated by culture through a process of mediation, or "cooking." The induction of nature into culture results in the marginalization of nature, producing instead what is "Natural." Science assumes an intervening role, performing transactions under the guise of knowledge, and revealing "the Natural" to culture through ideology. This mediation process is equally performed by art, examined here in the form of sculpture known as Earth Art. When not such a direct connection as this case, art is still akin to the status of science, coming between humans and a higher order of thought, being or feeling.

In this way, science, art, and cooking are all a form of fire; they all serve to deliver humans from the rawness of nature, giving to culture

instead what is "of nature" or "Natural." Nature still exists, but our perception of it is obscured by cultural ideology. It is, in fact, culture that produces the referent systems of science and art, furthering the distance from and the inability to recognize "Nature."

THE NATURE/CULTURE SCHISM

Science has revealed to us the important role the use of clay has played in the history of humankind. Pottery is referred to as a "sculptural tool," placed chronologically after the use of stone for hand-axes and blades. Food-gathering also occurred around this time, leading to the development of storage systems such as baskets, which were then soon discovered to have better preserving capabilities when lined with clay. All this took place about 10,000 or more years ago, during what is now termed the "Neolithic Revolution."¹ This was the span of time in which men and women began to live in villages, domesticate animals, and most importantly for archaeological dating methods, make pottery.

The control of fire was central to much of this rapid growth. Keeping warm was the first priority, no doubt leading to the development of cooking, and soon to the discovery that the clay lining the food storage baskets became rock-like after a time spent too close to the fire. That food-preparation and food-storage would be bonded by what was probably a campfire accident is perhaps a quirk of fate; but what the discovery did for the growth and sustenance of our species is beyond query. According to Stern:

¹Philip Van Doren Stern, Prehistoric Europe (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), p. 203.

Since harvested crops had to supply food for a whole winter, dry, cool and insect- and rodent-free storage places had to be provided for them. Baskets were used not only for gathering grain but for storing it. They were sometimes coated with clay to make them pestproof. Then when fire--probably by accident--baked one of these clay-smeared containers and hardened the covering into an impermeable substance, the basic idea for making pottery vessels was discovered. Paleolithic man had made figurines of fired clay, but it now became possible to produce large numbers of containers, utensils, and other useful objects from material that only had to be dug out of the ground. Until this time man had had nothing that could be placed over a fire for cooking. Boiling had been done by dropping hot stones into a container full of water.²

The instrument of fire, therefore, was a cause for the separation of humans from beasts; the primary distinction is thought to lie elsewhere, though, in the development of language. The ability of people to communicate and exchange knowledge through sound patterning broadened the nature/culture schism beyond the initial gap created by fire, which simply became another gift of nature for human use. The division between humans and nature took root in men and women seeing themselves apart from other beasts. Language established the capability of categorization, therefore distinguishing "us" as humans from "them," the other living creatures. As Leach points out:

All animals have a certain limited capacity to make category distinctions. Any mammal or bird can, under appropriate conditions, recognise other members of its own species and distinguish males from females; some can further recognise a category of predator enemies. Human beings, in the process of learning to talk, extend this category-forming capacity to a degree that has no parallel among other creatures, but nevertheless, at its very roots, before the individual's language capacity has become elaborated, category formation must be animal-like rather than human-like. At this basic level the individual (whether animal or human) is concerned only with very simple problems: the distinction between own species and other, dominance and submission, sexual availability or lack of availability, what is edible and what is not. In a natural environment distinctions of this sort are all that are necessary for individual survival, but they are not sufficient within a human environment. For human ... survival every member of society must learn to distinguish his fellow men according to their mutual social status. But the simplest way to

²Ibid, p. 240.

do this is to apply transformation of the animal level categories to the social classification of human beings. This is the key point in Levi-Strauss' Structuralist approach to the classic anthropological theme of Totemism.³

This categorizing process, in turn, separated not only humans from beasts, but according to Rousseau, the eighteenth century philosopher, eventually man from man: "It is supposed that men invented speech to express their needs ... [but] the natural effect of the first needs was to separate men, and not to bring them together."⁴ This view was further elaborated by Levi-Strauss.

Drawing on Rousseau's idea of man defining himself in terms of contrast to other creatures, Levi-Strauss applied this to the definition of "culture" in terms of contrast with "nature." First, humans must recognize themselves as identical to other human beings, then they can further this distinction to divide themselves from the world around them, coming to view it as raw material for their use. Levi-Strauss argued in his 1963 work:

It is because man originally felt himself identical to all those like him (among which, as Rousseau explicitly says, we must include animals) that he came to acquire the capacity to distinguish himself as he distinguishes them, i.e., to use the diversity of species as conceptual support for social differentiation.⁵

Through the four volumes of work titled Mythologiques, Levi-Strauss analyses myths not as elucidations of natural phenomena but as attempts

³Edmund Leach, Levi-Strauss (Glasgow: Fontana, 1970), pp. 39-40.

⁴J.J. Rousseau, "Essay on the Origin of Languages," The Indispensable Rousseau, John Hope Mason (London: Quartet Books, 1979), p. 95.

⁵Claude Levi-Strauss, Totemism, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 101.

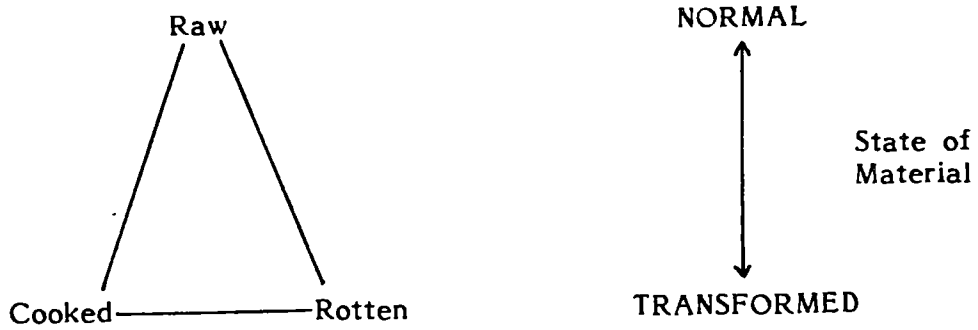
at resolving problems of human existence and social organization.⁶ Having observed that all societies partake in some sort of cooking just as all have some sort of language, he developed in these works the "culinary triangle," a diagram using the example of "raw and cooked" food as a metaphor for the cultural assimilation of nature. Edmund Leach notes that the aim of these works was to relocate totemic objects and animals as socially valuable rather than economically valuable ("functionalism" in anthropology), and sums up the "culinary triangle" thus:

In that we are men, we are all a part of Nature; in that we are human beings, we are all a part of Culture. Our survival as men depends on our ingestion of food (which is part of Nature); our survival as human beings depends upon our use of social categories which are derived from cultural classifications imposed on elements of Nature. ... food is an especially appropriate 'mediator' because, when we eat, we establish, in a literal sense, a direct identity between ourselves (Culture) and our food (Nature). Cooking is thus universally a means by which Nature is transformed into Culture, and categories of cooking are always peculiarly appropriate for use as symbols of social differentiation.⁷

This process can be seen in diagrammatic form. Transformation of the material plays a key role in the diagram; fresh raw food is transformed by culture, and becomes "cooked," while fresh raw food is transformed by nature to become "rotten."

⁶Claude Levi-Strauss, Mythologiques I-IV: Le cru et le cuit (Paris: 1964); Du miel aux cendres (Paris: 1966); L'origine des manieres de table (Paris: 1968); L'Homme nu (Paris: 1972).

⁷Leach, Levi-Strauss, p. 34.



CULTURE<----->NATURE

"Raw" is a category pertaining to both nature and culture; that is, raw includes food found in nature, as well as domesticated plants and animals. Levi-Strauss examined this analogy in great depth. The very title of one of the *Mythologiques* volumes being The Raw and the Cooked suggests that the metaphor plays a major role in his explanations of social process.

The workings of the diagram can be applied to the art world as well, with obvious relevance to the nature/culture debate. It has often been said that art acts as a mediator between humans and nature, or things akin to nature, such as God, fate, a higher order of thought, feeling or expression. These are all like nature in that they are outside of human control or rationality, and therefore need mediation to be assimilated into culture. Even an art material such as clay conforms well to the diagram, the material being capable of undergoing the same "cooking" process as the foodstuff. "Rotten" is the state of clay in nature; "raw" could include this category with the transformation of being located, dug, perhaps mixed with other materials, and finally, "cooked" into culture, where it is viewed as a "natural product."

In several of Levi-Strauss' exemplary myths, sometimes individuals were actually "cooked"; references are made to unmarried older sisters needing to be "warmed" over an oven when a younger sister wed first, "... a symbolic gesture intended to mediatize a person who, still unmarried, has remained imprisoned in nature and rawness, and perhaps even destined to decay."⁸ There are many examples of this "cooking" process, and Levi-Strauss sees these customs as forms of passage from nature to culture for the individual involved:

In Cambodia ... a woman who had just given birth was laid on a bed or raised grill under which there burned a slow fire. ... In America, Pueblo women gave birth over a heap of hot sand, which was perhaps intended to transform the child into a "cooked person" -- in contrast with natural creatures and natural or manufactured objects, which are "raw persons" (cf. Bunzel, p. 483). It was the habit of various Californian tribes to put women who had just given birth and pubescent girls into ovens, hollowed out in the ground. After being covered with mats and hot stones, they were conscientiously "cooked". ...

This rapid summary of customs ... does at least allow us to suggest a tentative definition: the individuals who are "cooked" are those deeply involved in a physiological process: the newborn child, the woman who has just given birth, or the pubescent girl. The conjunction of a member of the social group with nature must be mediatized through the intervention of cooking fire, whose normal function is to mediatize the conjunction of the raw product and the human consumer, and whose operation thus has the effect of making sure that a natural creature is at one and the same time cooked and socialized ... ⁹

It is this separation of man from nature that is of interest for our purposes. Levi-Strauss posed the question in Totemism: "How then are we to conceive, firstly, the triple passage (which is really only one) from animality to humanity, from nature to culture, and from affectivity

⁸Claude Levi-Strauss, The Raw and the Cooked, trans. Harper and Row, 1969 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 334, 338.

⁹Ibid, pp. 335-336.

to intellectuality, and, secondly, the possibility of the application of the animal and vegetable world to society, perceived already by Rosseau, and in which we see the key to totemism?"¹⁰ The query of where and how the break between nature and culture took place is often asked, with special emphasis on whether or not nature can ever be actually returned to, understood, or even precisely defined, after the initial break.

An example of a recent inquiry into the whereabouts of the human relationship with nature can be seen in the art work of the late 1960's, specifically the large outdoor sculpture that uses the earth as its primary material, or what we best know as Earth Art. Much of the criticism of the time appropriated a rather romantic view of nature, a kind of Utopia these works were holistically trying to uncover in a chivalric battle with the contemporary art market and its capitalist structure. Jack Burnham sees the works of this time as "[drawing] people away from substitute objects and back towards the ancient memories of life and productivity," and Lucy Lippard holds the artists were trying to "reinvest art with meaning,"¹¹ as though the very life was leached out of art by the Minimalists. She goes on in her recent book to argue:

The contemporary artist's renewed interest in natural process can in part be traced to a prevalent anxiety. ... We have lost our rural (matriarchal) connection with natural phenomena, and its resurrection seems less and less likely... ¹²

¹⁰Levi-Strauss, Totemism, p. 101.

¹¹Jack Burnham, "The Artist as Shaman," Great Western Salt Works: Essays on the Meaning of Post-Formalist Art (New York: George Braziller, 1974), p. 144; Lucy R. Lippard, "Gardens; Some Metaphors for a Public Art," Art in America 69 (November 1981): 137-38.

¹²Lucy R. Lippard, Overlay (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 45.

She debunks the emphasis on the individual, especially the individual artist, and the attention he has been given as a hero-figure over the past centuries - certainly, she believes, not something that took place before humans could read or write. Minimalists and Conceptualists wanted "to return to a more collective base,"¹³ to share a common symbolism with fellow man; perhaps this was so and perhaps it was achieved in some works, but it had little to do with nature in the end. Earth Art sculptors may have looked to pre-history to relocate their sense of time and purpose, travelling to "places where remote futures meet remote pasts,"¹⁴ but the place never was, nor never could be, a place that could be viewed without the veil of culture. "Nature," Robert Smithson wrote in "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," "is simply another 18th- and 19th-century fiction."¹⁵

So a fiction it is, but not in real terms. "Nature," as such, does exist; it is in our perception of nature that culture intervenes and obscures one's view of it. For example, "season" is an arbitrary term by which we divide time passing and the change in weather, yet "weather" is not nature, but "of nature" or "natural," a by-product of meteorological conditions revealed to us by science, which is, of course, cultural. Nature is drawn into culture, and there it assumes a position in which it is useful. Once it is inducted, it becomes "other," given meaning by being different to culture; therefore, it also enables culture to define

¹³Ibid., p. 80.

¹⁴Robert Smithson, "Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Projects," in The Writings of Robert Smithson, ed. Nancy Holt (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 91.

¹⁵Ibid., "A Museum of Language in the Vicinity of Art," p. 71.

itself. This view was recognized long before Rousseau's time, and is still prevalent today. As Judith Williamson argues:

Once nature has been drawn into culture it is given a meaning. ... In this sense, nature has been transformed into 'the Natural'. It can become a symbol once it has been 'cooked': because 'science' introduces it into a system of differentiations, giving it an order and cultural place which enable it to 'mean'. However, here 'raw' nature means precisely because it is a symbol of what culture has transformed. ...

'Nature' has simply become a referent of a 'cooking' society: it has meaning in terms of its relationship with what has transformed it, but is not valued in itself.¹⁶

Made significant by its opposition to culture, nature takes on a connotation of "other" on an imaginative level that is beyond the symbolic position it assumes. It is the "primary referent" of culture; that is, culture refers to itself in terms of what it has changed, its transformation of nature.¹⁷

Williamson locates science as an independent referent system that is produced by culture and reveals "the Natural" back to culture through ideology. Science examines nature for us, defining it, assigning it an order and importance. It then delivers back to culture what is "Natural," in terms of the classifications it invents. According to Williamson: "Thus science, by offering itself to us as something to be seen and understood, rather than the means by which we see and understand, is always something already there, like nature, something full of "facts," like nature, something Natural - replacing nature."¹⁸

¹⁶Judith Williamson, Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), pp. 103-04.

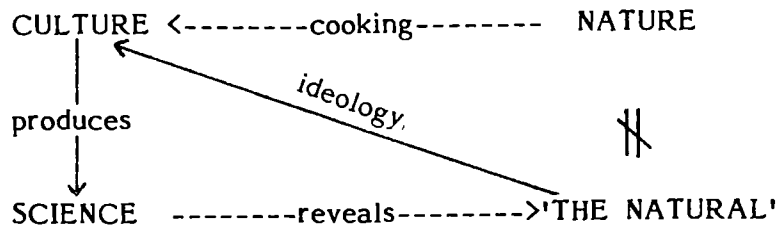
¹⁷Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 117.

Furthermore, "the Natural" has a transient quality, changing with the tide of technological development, to the degree that society will absorb and assimilate at any given time. "The Natural," through symbolizing nature, is guided by the demand, acceptance and desire of culture. As a symbol of nature, "the Natural" can be used to denote desirability, especially in advertising; what is natural can be inherently wholesome and good, or it can be as threatening as an avalanche or empty desert, a peril from which the product can deliver you safely. Either way, the emphasis is on the product which uses nature through the symbolic "natural" to foster a desire. Science orders nature for us, giving us a "natural" product to suit our needs, the very needs it helps to incite. To Levi-Strauss: "... the scientist never carries on a dialogue with nature pure and simple but rather with a particular relationship between nature and culture definable in terms of his particular period and civilization and the material means at his disposal."¹⁹

This is not to say that the relationship between nature and culture is not real; nor is it to say that nature itself is nonexistent. After culture draws in nature, it produces science, which in turn reveals "the natural" back to culture, thus establishing a false, culturally determined view of the initial relationship between nature and culture; a view best described as an ideology:

¹⁹Claude Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 19.



This ideology is responsible for our affection for what is "natural." The importance of the diagram is that it charts the production of images, the relations of symbols and not actual things.²⁰ Nature is real, but "the Natural" is symbolic; the movement in the diagram is all one-way.

Returning to our example of the Earth Art sculptors and their supposed search for nature, we can see that the movement was genuinely a cultural construct, fueled by the critics and supported by galleries, not to mention a wealth of published material by the artists themselves. Nature was a resource for an art practice, commodified in a manner akin to that found in advertising or energy. Produced by culture, Earth Art revealed back to culture a nature fully cooked by the scientific alchemy of art. In fact, Levi-Strauss found a place for art in his work as well, nearly equating it with a science of imagery. For example, he notes "art lies half-way between scientific knowledge and mythical thought," and also "mythical thought can be capable of generalizing and so be scientific, even though it is still entangled in imagery."²¹

²⁰Williamson, Decoding Advertisements, p. 135.

²¹Levi-Strauss, The Savage Mind, p. 22, 20.

So art operates a great deal like science, revealing the relationship between nature and culture through ideology, in this case, the ideology of "sculpture." Earth Art seems especially poignant, with the flurry of land-use issues and primitivism that surrounds it. To Rosalind Krauss:

As the 1960s began to lengthen into the 1970s and "sculpture" began to be piles of thread waste on the floor, or sawed redwood timbers rolled into the gallery, or tons of earth excavated from the desert, or stockades of logs surrounded by firepits the word sculpture became harder to pronounce -- but not really that much harder ... it is a historically bounded category and not a universal one. As is true of any other convention, sculpture has its own internal logic, its own set of rules, which, though they can applied to a variety of situations, are not themselves open to very much change.²²

This "internal logic" can be found in all art forms; each performs some form of mediation, though it may not be as succinct an example as Earth Art. Conceptual art, for example, mediates between man and a higher order of abstract thought, which is akin to nature in that it looms as an untapped reserve. The invented need for mediation between a raw nature that threatens death and decay and a cooked culture that offers preservation and immortality is the reason for the intolerance found in the guidelines by which good art, and good science, are judged.

Clarifying the process by which we have learned to understand the term "Nature" exposes science and art as key proponents of the elaborate referent system by which culture defines itself. Science and art are kept to a pattern of producing an ideological "Nature," since culture demands to be fed what is "cooked." The rules, conventions and ideology that keep the cycle intact are all culturally generated. From the time when

²²Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, ed. Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Washington: Bay Press, 1983), p. 33.

we divided ourselves from other beasts to the present world in which we have worn nature thin in our use, our understanding of nature has been governed by the culture we continue to produce, a culture that defines itself by what it is not.

Nature exists, but our knowledge of it is only through the ideology of "the natural." Inducted into culture and therefore marginalized, nature is replaced by the nebulous "natural." The raw materials that are taken from nature and made useful, for industry, for art, and even for pottery, are "cooked" from the moment they are recognized and dug from the ground, whether they ever touched flame or not.

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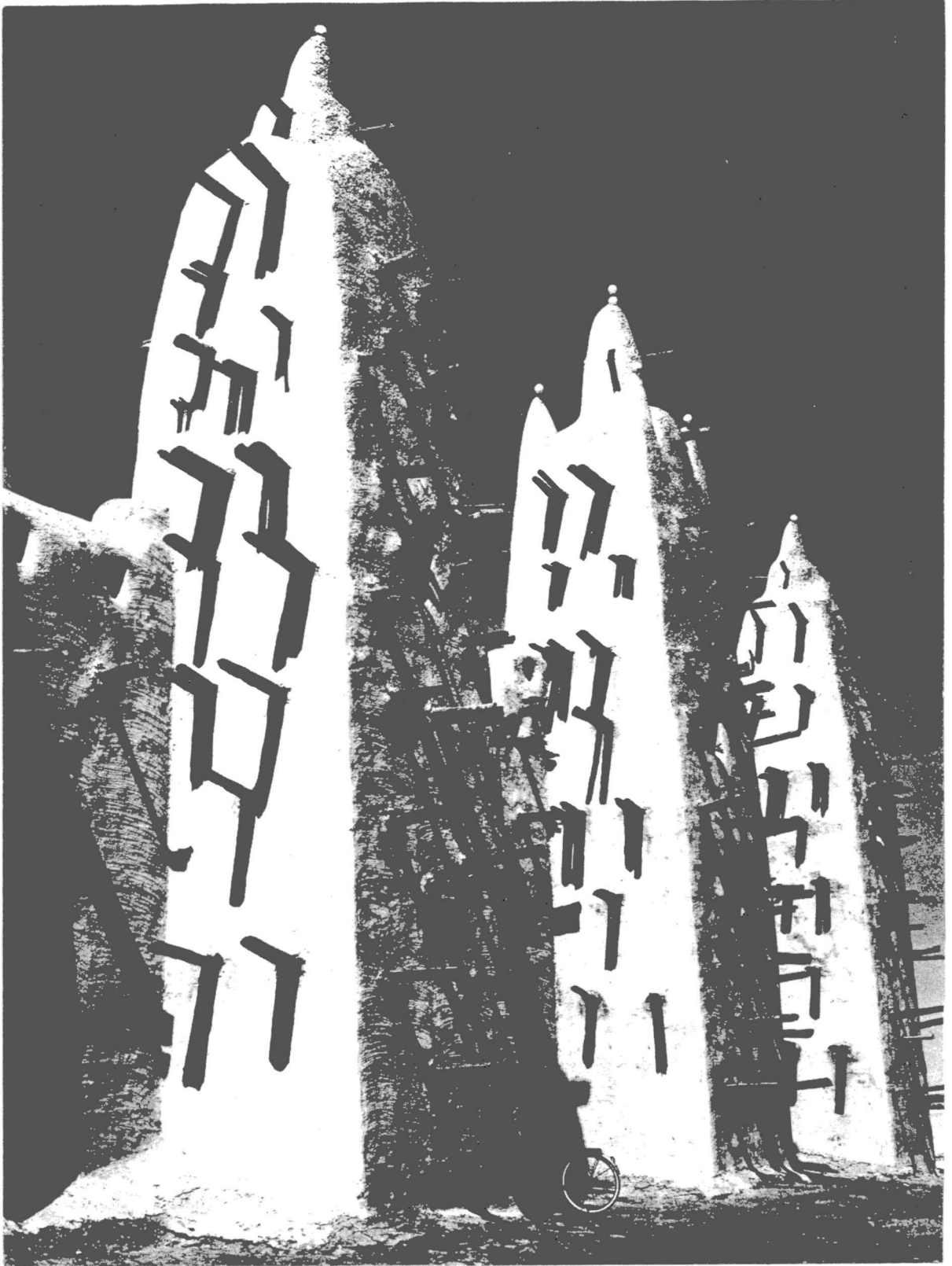
WORK AND PROCESS: LATE 1985

In the work of this time, which spans the latter pieces made of hessian and clay to the return of those made of wire, paper and clay, an attempt at re-employing the architectural forms to the now reinforced "invented sacredness" was made. Having gained much insight from the anthropomorphic works made of hessian, I returned to more explicit architectural forms, and combined these with found or formed "punctum" objects, to give the viewer a clearer sense of decay and entropy. A process work also belongs to this time, existing in documentary photographs and the documentary "decayed" object itself.

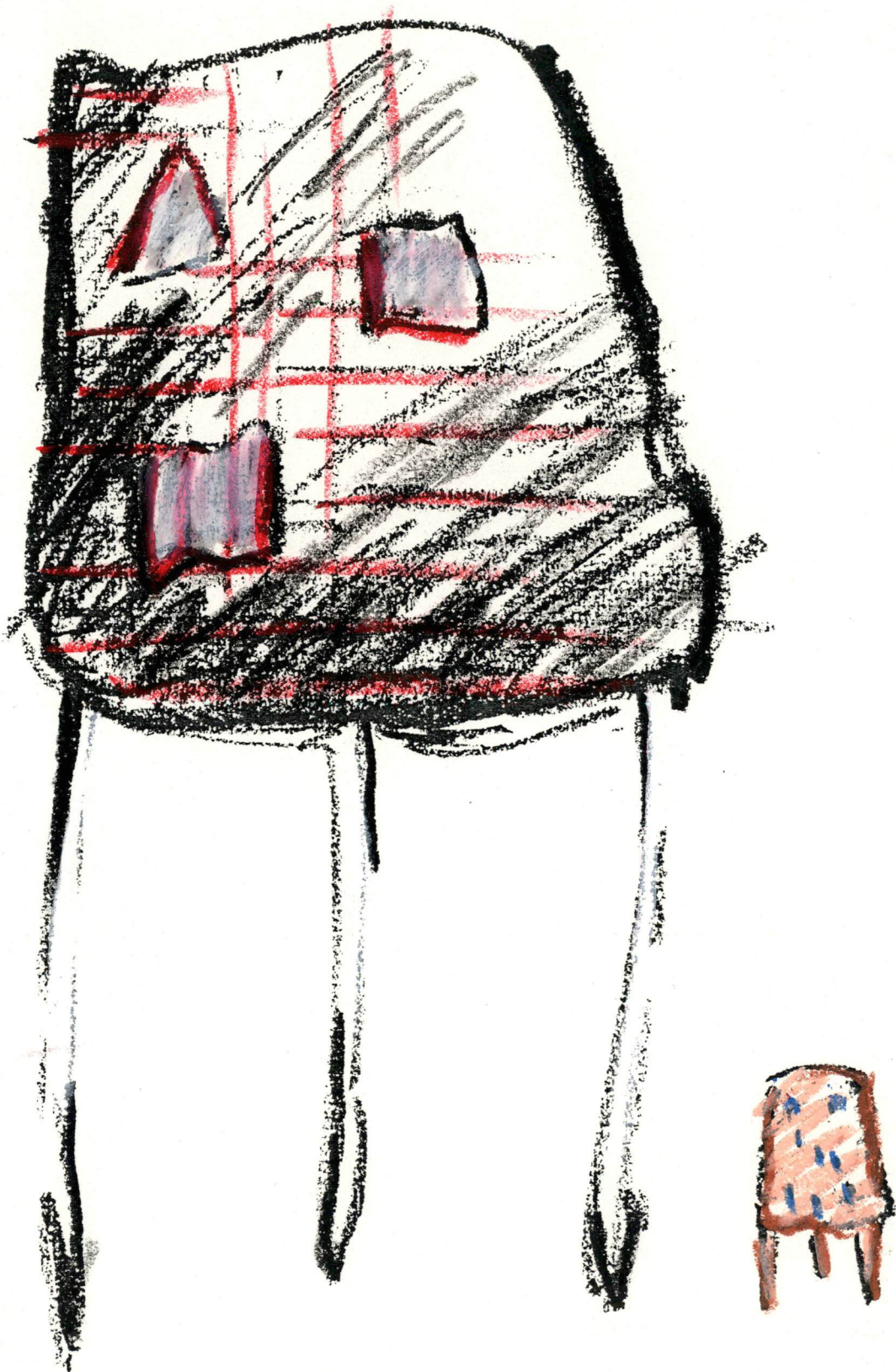
Through using entropy as a springboard for production, I have felt free to let works actually deteriorate to facilitate their feeling of enroaching dilapidation. Eroding processes have been put into check through the addition of stabilizing agents such as glucose and PVA glue, mixed into the clay when wet. For exhibition and travelling purposes, and as set out in the proposal, nearly all the works are gallery-oriented. They can survive much handling if it is done properly.

During the writing of the second seminar paper, I learned much about how earth materials tend to be viewed as "natural." Since clay is my major medium, I am constantly confronted with this perspective, even though the manner in which I use clay has little to say about nature. I

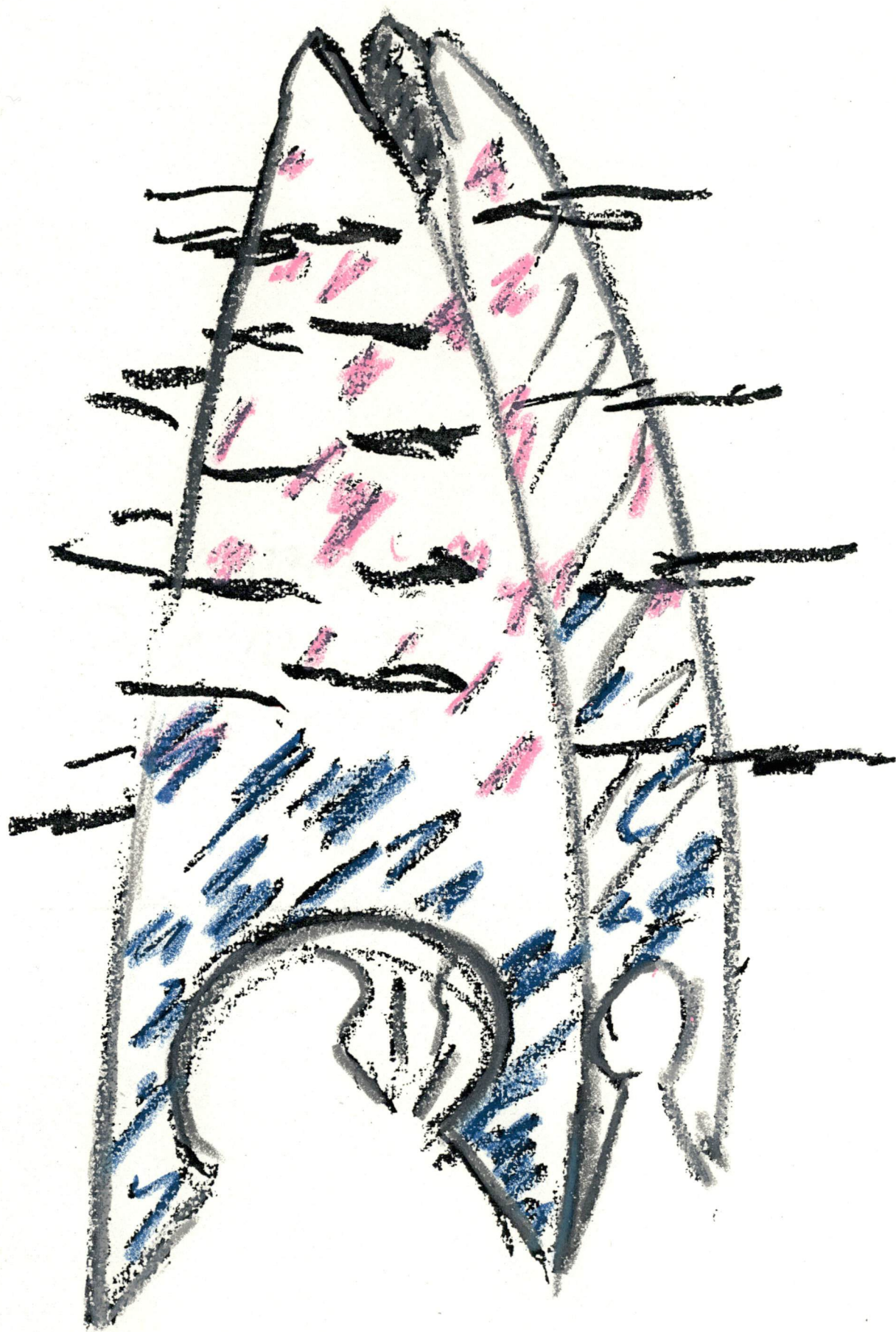
find clay appropriate for works about entropy and decay because clay is inherently decomposed. By the time the clay I use is dug, processed, stabilized and painted, its no more natural than shoe polish. It is simply "cooked" into culture through art instead of fire.

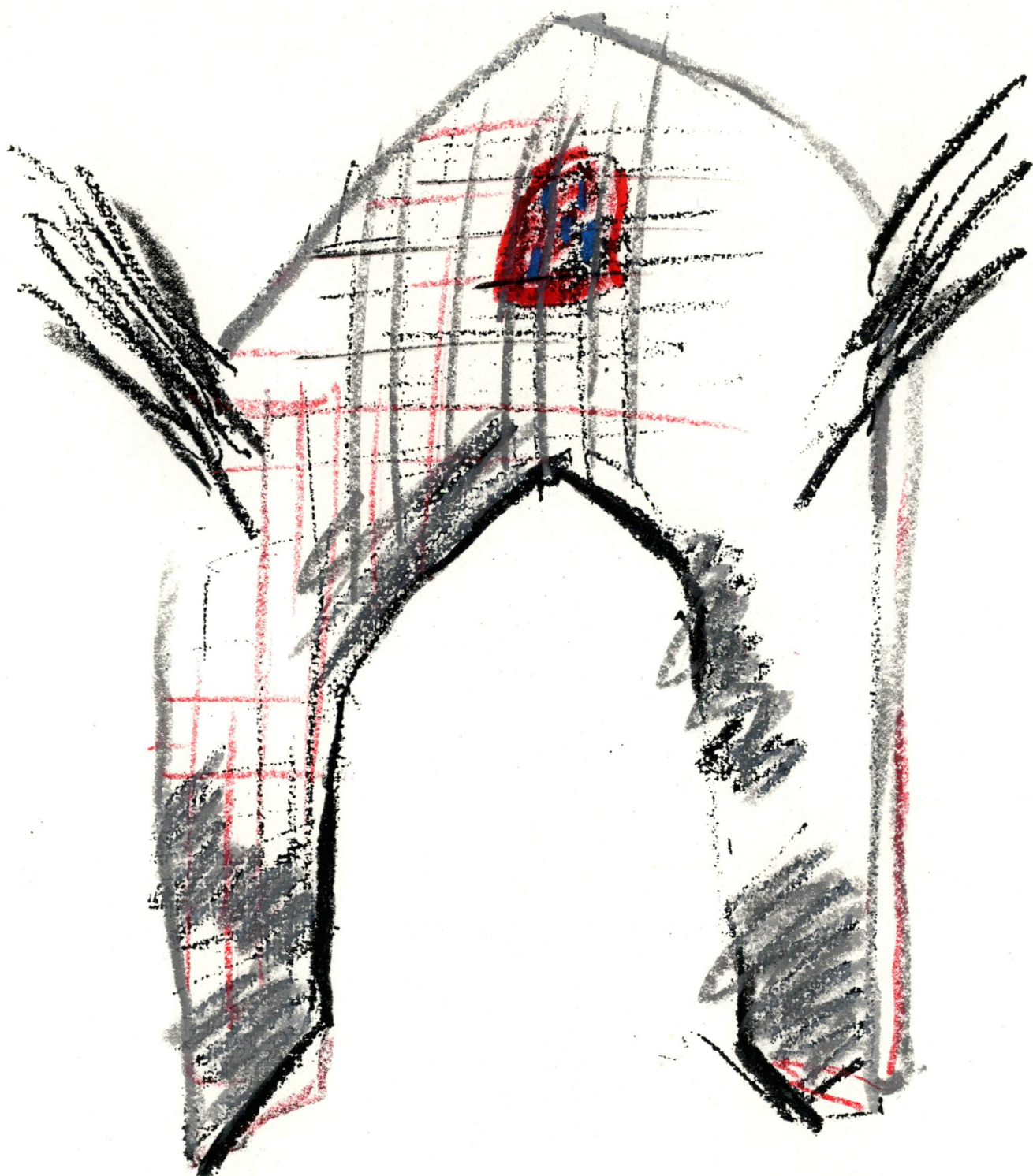


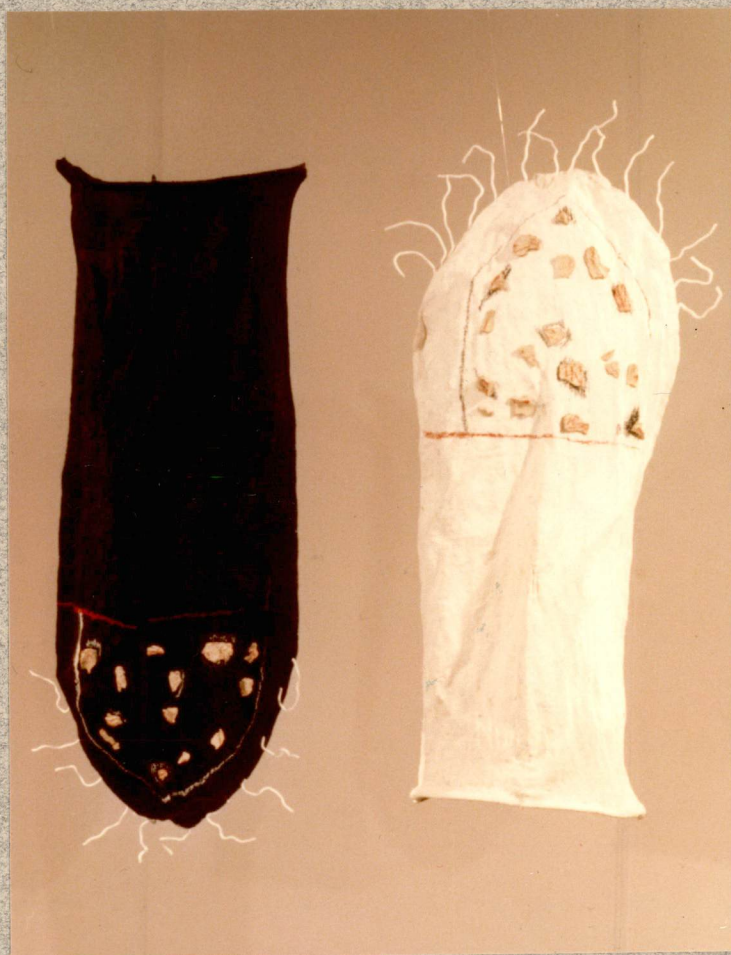
Friday Mosque at San in Mali, in Dethier, Down to Earth: Mud Architecture: an old idea, a new future.



Pallograph
(monument to language)

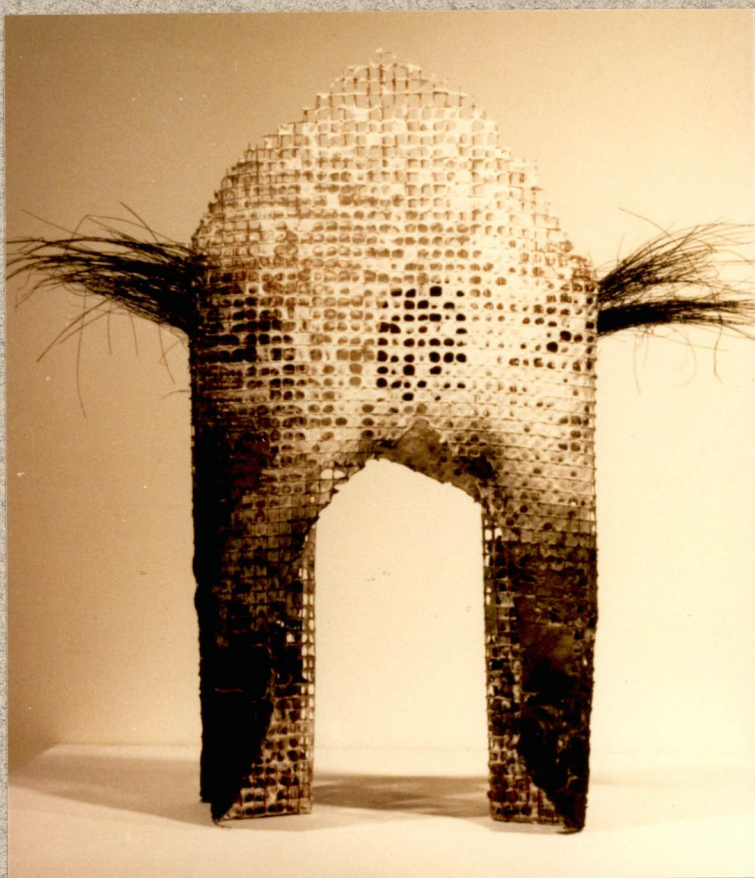






Opposed Monuments

Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Styrofoam,
Paint. 100 cm (40") Long 1985



Arch

Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Grass,
Fired Clay. 75 cm (29½") High 1985



1! Monument: Lost/Found

Clay and Hessian Monument (foreground)
place on site with found Wooden Monument.
Process Work: 1985



2. Monument: Lost/Found

Clay and Hessian Monument (foreground) is
lost to overnight rise in tide.

Process Work: 1985



Eclectic Edifice

Raw Clay, Paper, Paint, Mangrove Seeds,
Wire, Wood.

1985

173 cm (68") High



Black Paleograph

Black Paper, Wire, Fired Clay, Wood,
Paint. 183 cm (6') High

1985

**COMMON
EARTH**

Alive & Unfired

EARTH

COMMON

INTRODUCTION

The ideological confines of working within a given “discipline” can be suffocating to any artist. Many who work in clay have come to find “ceramics” constricting, either because of its functional implications, or because of its long history of being fired. Over the centuries, “ceramics” has become synonymous with the firing process, which renders irreversible changes on the clay. Fired forms can be broken but not destroyed, the high temperatures having transformed the clay’s physical structure forever. Yet, throughout the growth of knowledge about this process, there has been a continuing tradition of those who leave their clay unfired.

Raw clay houses over one-third of the world’s population. Nomadic peoples still form utensils out of it as they did thousands of years ago, and there are adobe ruins the world over dating as far back as the third millennium B.C. Yet, until the late 1960’s, the artistic capabilities of raw clay went virtually unnoted. It was not until that time, through the works of the Earth Art sculptors and process/installation artists, that unfired clay began to form part of the art mainstream. Feeling the contemporary art market alienated maker from made and art from life, these artists began to employ earthen materials, most outdoors, but some returning documentation or actual works to the gallery. Repercussions of these movements led many to experiment with raw substances through the 1970’s and into the ’80’s, and clay has drawn particular focus for its long history of interaction with human development.

Today this focus has an increasing clarity of reference to antiquity in respect to our ever more tenuous existence. There are a handful of people using unfired clay in their art in Australia. Those represented here come from several cultural backgrounds, exemplifying a varied approach to a mutual material. Warping, cracking and drying, held tight by concrete or photography, we see here uncommon concepts, brought together only by common earth.

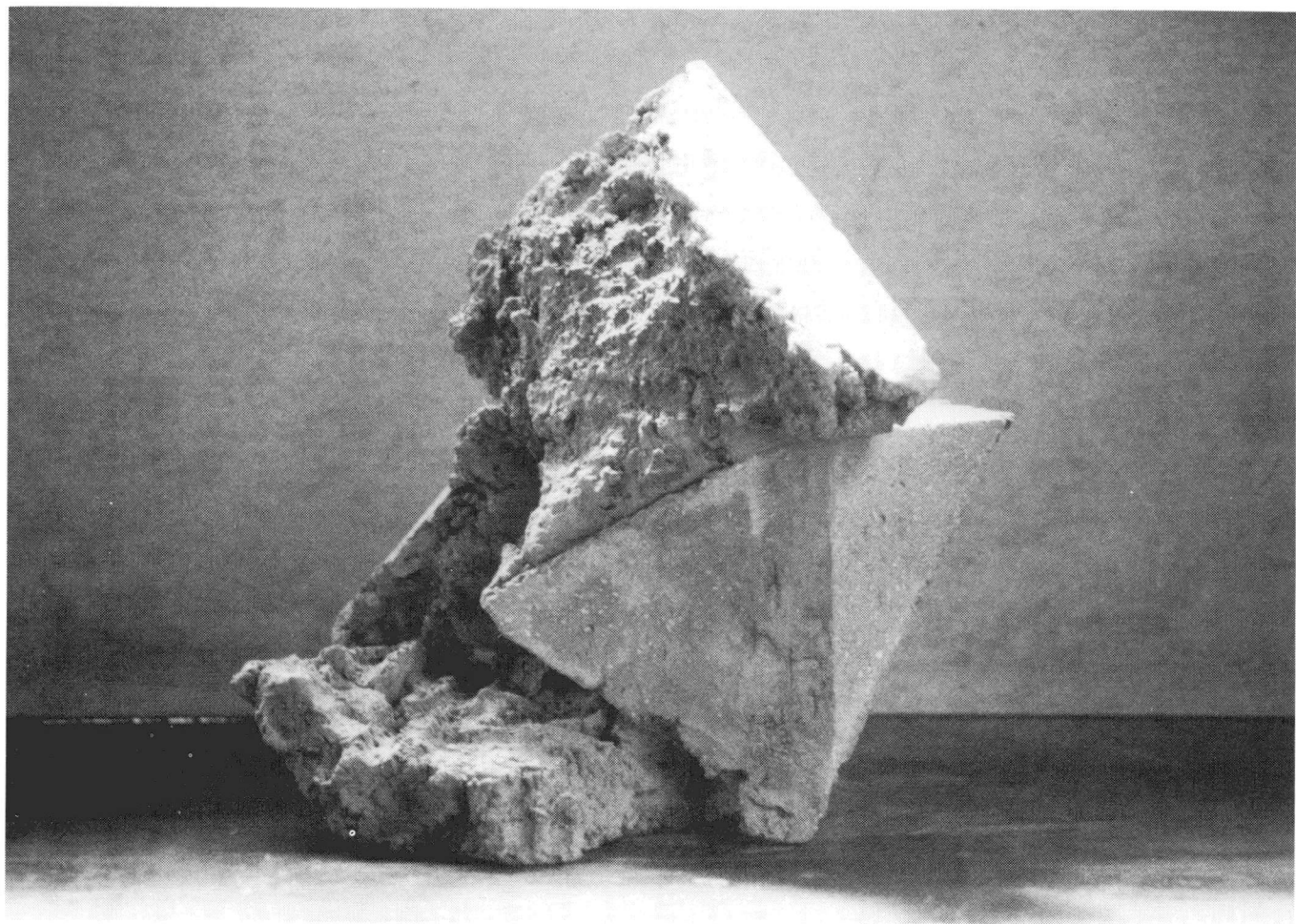
Marie Sierra-Hughes
1985.

ISBN O 85901 281 6

Curated by Penny Smith and Marie Sierra-Hughes

The University of Tasmania Fine Arts Gallery, June 4 – July 5, 1985.

The Fine Arts Committee and the Curators wish to acknowledge the assistance of Sally McGillivray, Jon Williamson, Penny Hawson, the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council.



GREG WAIN

BORN

1943 Melbourne

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1976, 78 Warehouse Gallery, Melbourne: Sculpture and Drawing.
1977 Craft Centre, South Yarra, Victoria: Ceramics.
1979 Bonython Gallery, Adelaide, S.A.: Ceramics.
1980 Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne: Sculpture and Drawing.
1982, 83 Distelfink Gallery, Hawthorn, Vic.: Ceramics.
1984 Mark Widdup Gallery, Newcastle, N.S.W.: Ceramics and Sculpture.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1976 Small Sculpture Biennial, Budapest, Hungary.
Concorso Internazionale Della Ceramica D'Arte, Faenza, Italy.
1979 Mayfair Ceramic Award, Sydney.
1980 Collection Pieces, National Gallery of Victoria.
1981 All White Show, Gryphon Gallery, Melbourne.
1981, 82 Australian Crafts '81 & '82, Meat Market Craft Centre, Melbourne.
1982 Contemporary Australian Ceramics, Touring Exhibition, U.S.A. and New Zealand.
1984 Darling Downs 1st National Ceramic Award, Toowoomba, Qld.
Alice Springs Ceramics Acquisition, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria.
Crafts Board Collection.
Victorian State Craft Collection, Meat Market, Vic.
Art Gallery of Western Australia.
Regional Galleries including: Newcastle, Bathurst, Benalla, Launceston, Latrobe Valley.
Artbank.
City of Caulfield Art Collection, Vic.
Shire of Diamond Valley Collection, Vic.
Institute Collections, Melbourne C.A.E.
Gippsland Institute, Latrobe Valley, Vic.
Chisholm Institute.
Jackson Collection, Geelong Art Gallery.

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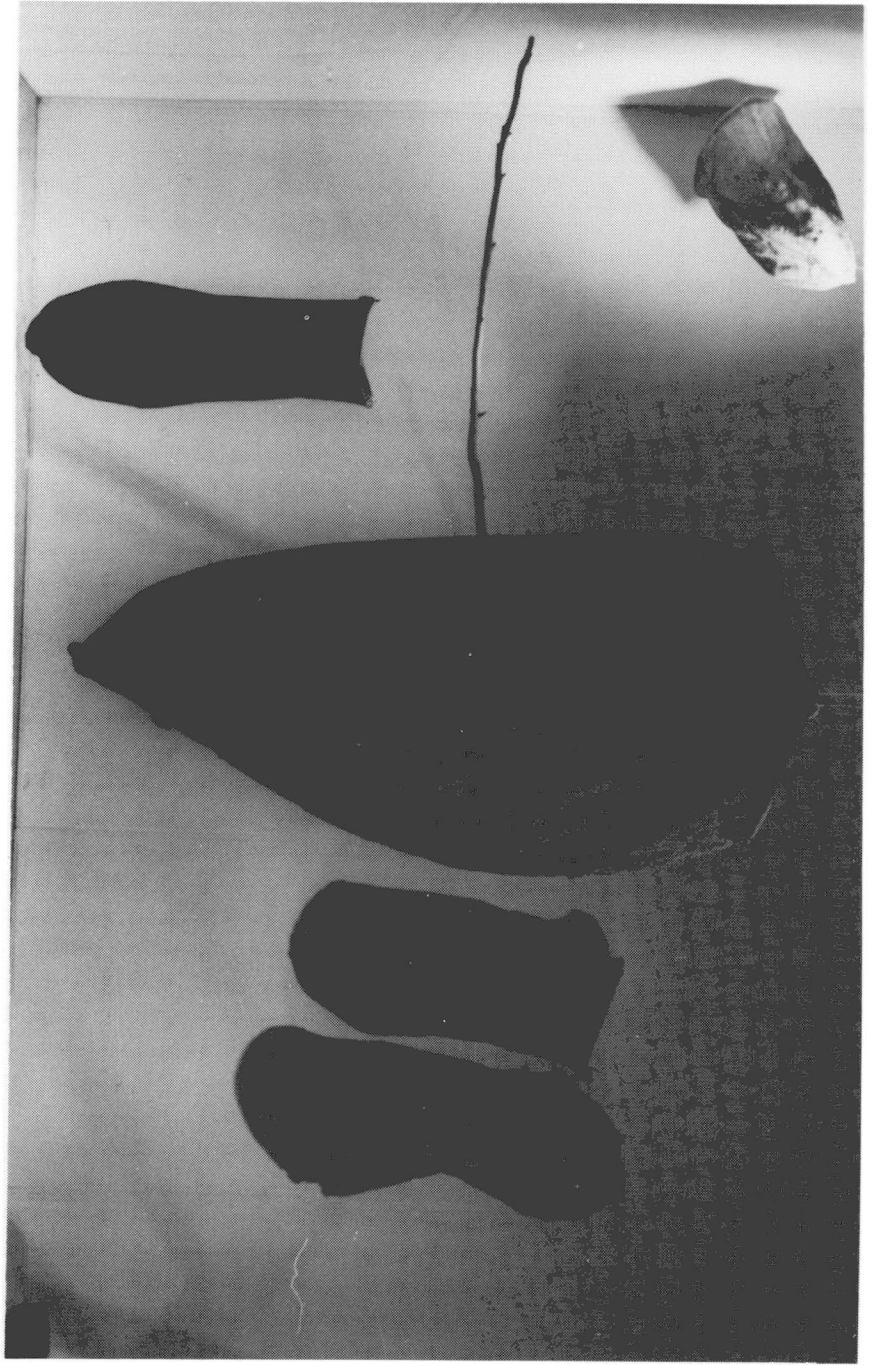
G. Boorman: *Ceramics of the World*, Dusseldorf, 1983.
"Issues of Pottery in Australia", *Craft Australia* and *Craft Victoria*.



STATEMENT

Represented here is one aspect of my current work. That more often seen is of a decorative nature, generally plates. As in the sculptural pieces the plates rely, to a great extent, on the process of making for their aesthetic content.

These works are concerned with the forms, spaces, feelings, related to man-made environments. They are often contrasted with the apparent random quality associated with naturally occurring forms in landscape/geology. Many of the processes involved (and often the materials themselves) are derived from building techniques and methods and intend to use sculpturally the spaces, surfaces and structures of building.



MARIE SIERRA-HUGHES

BORN

1961 Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

STUDIES

- 1981 Associate of Arts, Tulsa Junior College, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- 1983 Bachelor of Fine Arts Cum Laude, Ceramics, University of Tulsa.
- 1984-85 Presently Master of Fine Arts Programme, University of Tasmania, School of Art.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 1980-81 Art Department Lab Assistant, Tulsa Junior College.
- 1982 Ceramics Department Assistant, University of Tulsa.
Instructor, Johnson Atelier Art Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- 1981-84 Apprentice Metalsmith to W.R. Derrevere, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- 1983-84 Instructor, Philbrook Museum School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, conducting classes in Drawing, Ceramics and Metalsmithing.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1980, 81 Tulsa Junior College Student Work, juried exhibition, honorable mention in 1980.
- 1982 Bartlesville Craft Show, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, juried exhibition.
- 1982, 83 Gussman Annual Student Art Exhibit, University of Tulsa, juried exhibition.
- 1983 Guest Exhibitor, Tulsa Designer Craftsmen Show, Tulsa.
Arkansas Art Center 16th Annual Prints, Drawings and Crafts Exhibition, Little Rock, Arkansas, juried exhibition, honorable mention.
- 1984 "Chosen Works", Johnson Atelier, Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- 1985 Student Representatives Exhibition, Fourth National Ceramics Conference, Melbourne, in connection with the lecture delivered at Student Forum, "Unfired Clay in Art and History", representing the State of Tasmania.
"Handle with Care", Tasmanian School of Art Ceramics at Chisholm Institute of Technology, Melbourne.

AWARDS

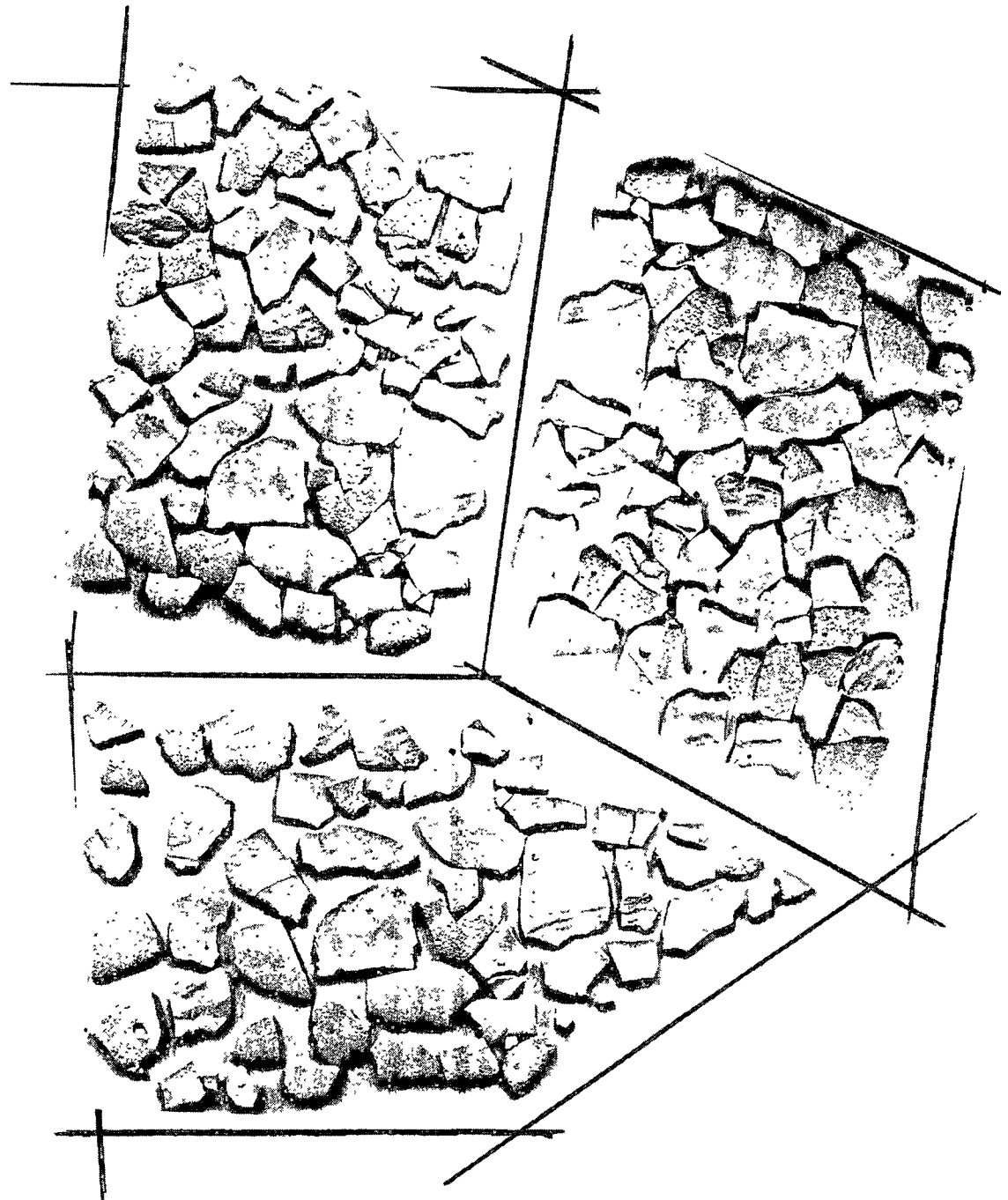
- 1979-81 Fee Waiver Scholarship, Tulsa Junior College.
- 1981-83 General Scholarship, University of Tulsa.
- 1982 Mager Mortgage Company Grant, University of Tulsa.
- 1985 Postgraduate Course Award, University of Tasmania, School of Art.



STATEMENT

The main source of energy for my concepts is decay, especially the paradoxical deterioration of "permanent" markers of past civilizations. The monuments and public buildings of lost cultures, as well as tombstones, sarcophagi and other markers of "endurance" all take on an ironic context when seen in a state of decomposition. They become poignant reminders of our own impermanence, resonating through our time as they mark their own. The sculptural use of clay is my avenue for the artistic exploration of "permanent" structures, and in an unfired state it speaks even more clearly of entropy.

Gothic forms are especially of interest, with their implications of power and other-worldliness, all distilled in what is actually a negative space. Working with this form, making it a positive object or vessel-like through inversion, reveals it as a symbol, an ideological construct, as subject to decomposition as the monument itself.



KAY GILL

BORN

1943 South Australia.

STUDIES

1985 Presently 3rd year B.F.A. student, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

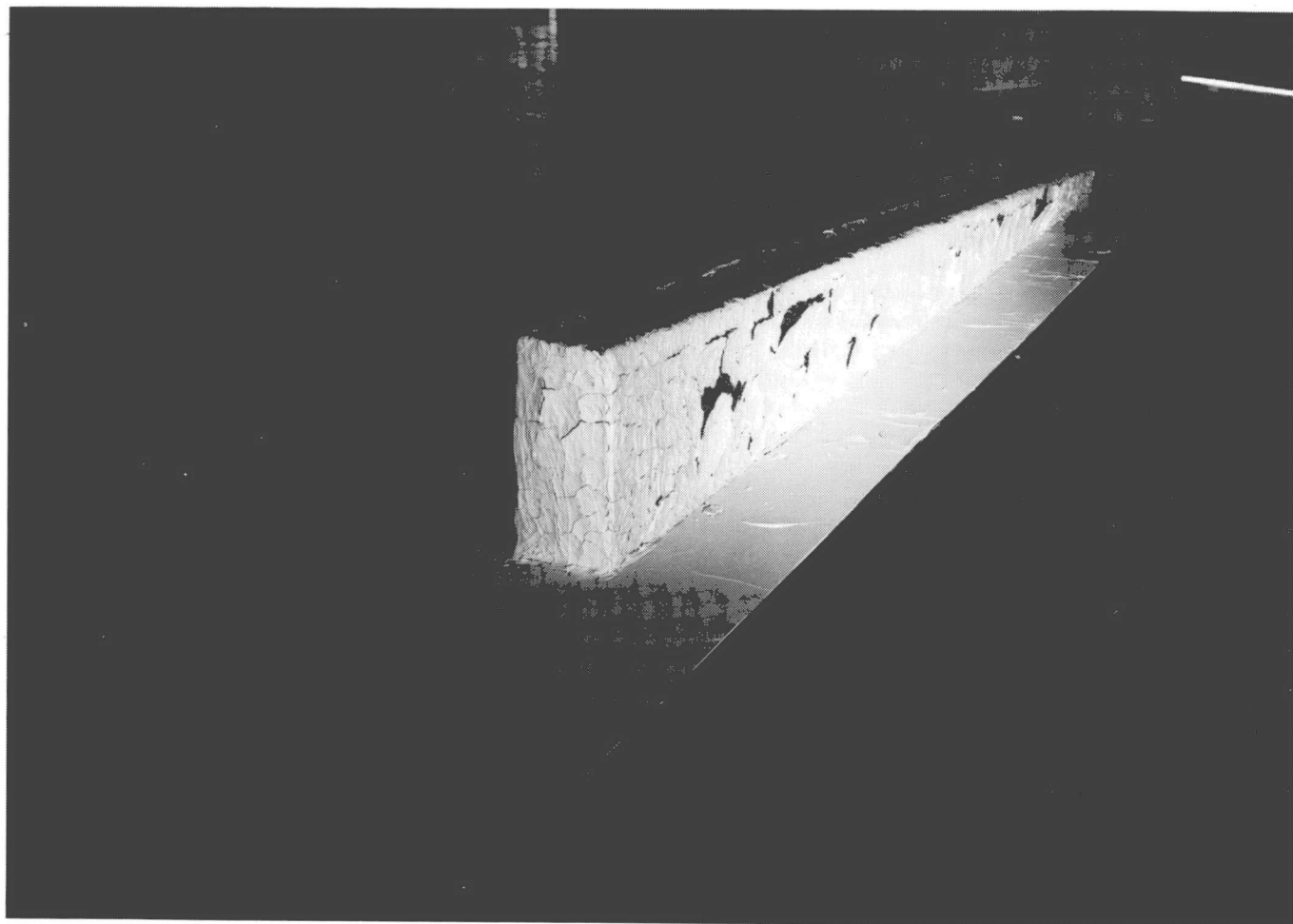
1985 "Handle with Care", Tasmanian School of Art Ceramics at Chisholm Institute of Technology, Melbourne.



STATEMENT

The use of the house as a vehicle for artistic expression, and an interest in and concern for the natural environment has been the impetus of my recent work.

The ability of unfired clay to be permanent, semi-permanent, or impermanent, to express the evolution and devolution of matter, along with the need to immerse myself in the rhythm of the making process make clay, for me, an ideal material.



MITSUO SHOJI

BORN

1946 Osaka, Japan

STUDIES

1965-67 Studied painting, sculpture, basic arts and design at the Art Institute of Osaka City Museum.
 1967-71 Ceramics at Kyoto City University of Fine Arts — Graduated with BFA.
 1971-73 Ceramics at the same University as above — Graduated with MFA.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

1973-74 Caulfield Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Australia.
 1975 National Art School (East Sydney Technical College), Sydney, Australia.
 California State University, San Jose, California, USA.
 1976-77 Eko School of Ceramics & Osaka School of Art, Osaka, Japan.
 1977 California State University, San Jose, California, USA.
 1978 Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney, Australia.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1977 Nakamiya Gallery, Osaka, Japan.
 Iteza Gallery, Kyoto, Japan.
 1979 David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.
 1980 Victor Mace Art Gallery, Brisbane.
 "Clay Work", NSW University, Sydney.
 1981 "Black Firing & Clay Painting", Sydney.
 1982 "Ceramics", Gryphon Gallery, Victoria State College, Melbourne.
 "Recent Pottery" by Peter Rushforth and Mitsuo Shoji, David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 1979 Selected work for Australian Craft touring show to Europe.
Mayfair Ceramics Exhibition, Sydney.
- 1981 Mayfair Ceramics Exhibition, Melbourne.
"Ceramics" show, Ivan Dougherty Gallery, Alexander Mackie College, Sydney.
- 1982 "Image and Origin", Australia Craft Council Gallery, Sydney.
"Recent Ceramics Show", Wollongong City Gallery, NSW.
"Ceramics Show", Penrith Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW.
Fletcher Brown Built Pottery Award, Auckland, New Zealand.
"Concorso Internazionale Della Ceramica", Faenza, Italy.
"International Raku" show, Galerie le Uzes, France.
- 1983 "A Different Perspective", Opening show at Art Space, Sydney.
"Clothes and Clay Exhibition", Orange Arts Festival, Orange.
Ceramics Show, Penrith Art Gallery, Penrith, NSW.
"New Directions", Jam Factory Craft Centre, 2nd Australian Potters Conference, Adelaide, SA
"Ceramics — Objects and Figures", University of Tasmania and Travelling Show in Tasmania.
"New Directions", Distelfink Gallery, Melbourne
"Asian Interface: Australia/Japan", Crafts Council Centre Gallery, Sydney.
Project 43, New South Wales Art Gallery, Sydney.

COLLECTIONS

Faenza International Ceramics Museum, Faenza, Italy.
Australian National Gallery, Canberra, Australia.
National Gallery of Victoria, Australia.
Queensland Art Gallery, Australia.
The Art Gallery of Western Australia, Australia.
Newcastle Art Gallery, Australia.
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Australia.
Shepparton Art Gallery, Australia.
Arrarat Art Gallery, Australia.
Brisbane Civic Art Gallery and Museum, Qld, Australia.
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney.
Meat Market (Victoria Craft Museum, Melbourne).
Macquarie State College.
Kelvin Grove College of Advanced Education, Brisbane.
Churchlands College of Advanced Education, W.A.
School of Art, Brisbane, Qld.
Memphis Academy of Art, Tennessee, USA.
California State University, San Jose, USA
Artbank.

AWARDS

- 1976 "City Art Exhibition", 1st Prize Yomiuri press award, Osaka, Japan.
- 1982 Hunters Hill Craft Awards, Sydney, Australia.
Purchasing Award, "Faenza International Ceramics Show", Faenza, Italy.



COMMISSIONS

- 1974 Presentation of platter to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam from principal of Caulfield Institute of Technology, Melbourne.
- 1980 Selected work by Craft Board to Australian Embassy, New Delhi, India.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Frequent mention in *Pottery in Australia* and *Craft Australia*.

STATEMENT

I am a potter who makes pots, plates and tableware. However, I believe that ceramics should not only be used in that traditional manner, but also could be treated differently, although using the same processes.

Therefore, I sometimes use clay in its raw, unfired state or fire different materials such as wood or metallic leaf.

I am greatly impressed by Australian bushfires both aesthetically and physically. To discover that the native plants need fire in order to release their seeds from their tough seed pods was exciting. I am not a religious person but I feel a parallel between bushfires and the Buddhist concept of cremation, when a soul passes from this world to the next.

I would like to make a statement about my work:

*Black and white is my base world
Colours are my emotions
Forms are the essential territory of my mind
Clay is my body
Fire is my spirit*



HOSSEIN VALAMANESH

BORN

1949 Tehran, Iran

STUDIES

1970 Graduated, School of Fine Art, Tehran.
 1974 Travelled to Central Australia as Art Advisor with Aboriginal children.
 1977 Graduated, South Australian School of Art.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1972 Shiraz University, Tehran.
 1977 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide
 1980 Festival Centre Gallery, Adelaide.
 1981 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide.
 Praxis Gallery, Perth
 Execution Installation, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
 1983 Bonython Art Gallery, Adelaide

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1978 Group Show, Royal Art Society of South Australia.
 Adelaide University Gallery.
 1979 Installation, Experimental Art Foundation, Four Young Artists, Contemporary Art Society Gallery, Adelaide.
 1980 Designed Roundspace Project for Adelaide Festival of Art – Alternatives (Dwelling), sponsored by the Art Gallery of S.A.
 Canberra Group Exhibition, Arts Council Gallery
 Installation, Roundspace Gallery, Adelaide.
 1981 First Australian Sculpture triennale, Latrobe University, Melbourne.
 Centenary Exhibition, Art Gallery of South Australia.
 Relics and Rituals, National Gallery of Victoria.
 Art Gallery of Western Australia.
 1982 Roundspace Members' Festival Exhibition.
 1983 Installation, Macquarie Galleries, Sydney.
 Survey of recent South Australian Sculpture, Art Gallery of S.A.
 Anzart-in-Hobart, Hobart.
 1984 26 Characters – Artists' Week, Adelaide.
 Small Wonders, Roundspace Members, Adelaide Festival.
 Australian Sculpture, Art Gallery of Western Australia
 On Site, Tasmanian School of Art Gallery, Hobart.
 1985 "Singular and Plural", S.A. School of Art Gallery.

AWARDS

1976 Lidums' Art Gallery Prize for students.
 1978 Protege Prize, Masters' Choice Exhibition, Adelaide Festival of Arts.
 1979-80 Visual Arts Board Grant.
 1980 Artist-in-Residence, Praxis, Western Australia.
 1982 Visual Arts Board Grant.
 1983 Artist-in-Residence, Mt. Gambier, South Australia.

COMMISSIONS

1982 Commission for an environmental sculpture at South Australian College of Arts and Education.
 1985 Commission for sculpture for the Atrium of Commonwealth Centre, Adelaide.

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria.
 Art Gallery of South Australia.
 Adelaide College of Arts and Education.
 Artbank.
 Art Gallery of Western Australia.
 Western Australian Institute of Technology.
 Australian National Gallery, Canberra
 Queensland Art Gallery
 Alice Springs Art Centre.

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Australian (19/7/1978; 17/7/1981; 5/10/1983; 19-20/5/84.

Ikebana Ohara (Japan) No.393, 8/1983.

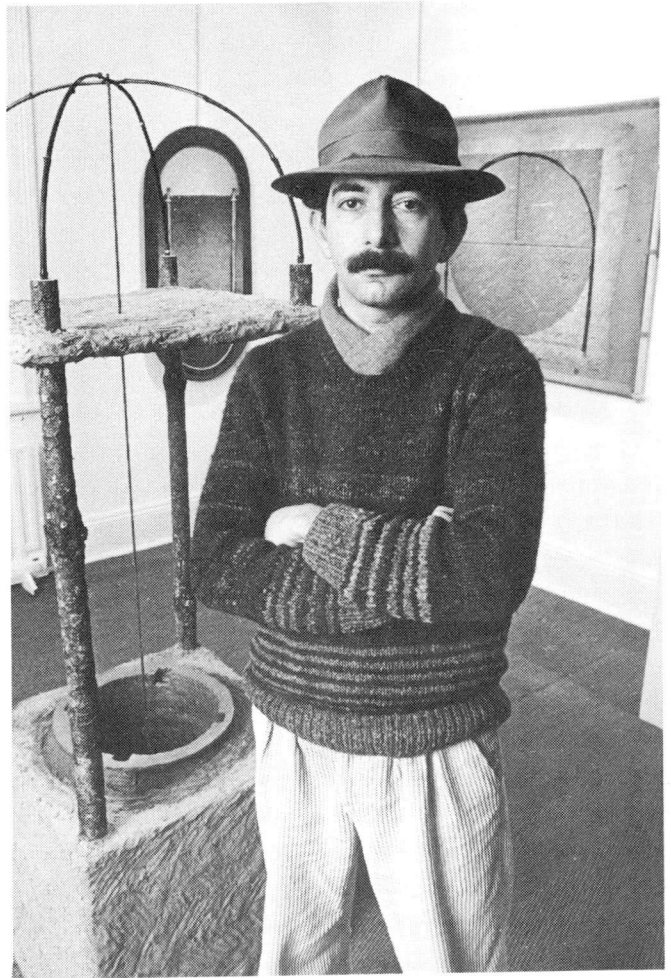
News (S.A.) 20/8/1980.

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Singular and Plural 1985 catalogue, S.A. School of Art.



STATEMENT

I have been recently concerned with creating images of balance, tranquility and peace — things which we seem to lack in our lives.

Some people think my work has religious connotations; the association of my being from Iran suggests Islam, but I find that unfortunate. It is understandable however because of the Iconic feeling, the symmetry of the forms. I hope people will begin to look at it from a spiritual rather than a religious view point.

I use simple geometric designs, the square, circle or triangle and their 3 dimensional variations as containers and within them I put what I want to say or show. This way I am less preoccupied with working out new formats for my work.

Over the last 8 or 9 years I have used a variety of natural materials like earth and coloured pigments, sand, sticks, stone, wood, water, fire and others. My use of such materials has evolved slowly. At times the ideas have dictated the materials. I have also introduced the element of time by using growing plants, trees or oil burners.



JOHN DAVIS

BORN

1936 Australia.

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

- 1969 Strines Gallery, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1971 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1972 Gallery One Eleven, Brisbane, Qld.
- 1974 Pinacotheca Gallery, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1975 Monash University, Melbourne, Vic.
C.A.S. Gallery, Adelaide, S.A.
- 1977 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1978 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1979 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.

- 1980 Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, Qld.
Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong, N.S.W.
Q Space Annex, Brisbane, Qld.
Q Space, Brisbane, Qld.
- 1981 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1982 Ina Gallery, Tokyo, Japan.
Ryo Gallery, Kyoto, Japan.
- 1983 Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Gallery Anri, Nagoya, Japan.
- 1984 The University of Southern California Atelier,
Los Angeles, U.S.A.
- 1985 Watters Gallery, Sydney, N.S.W.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

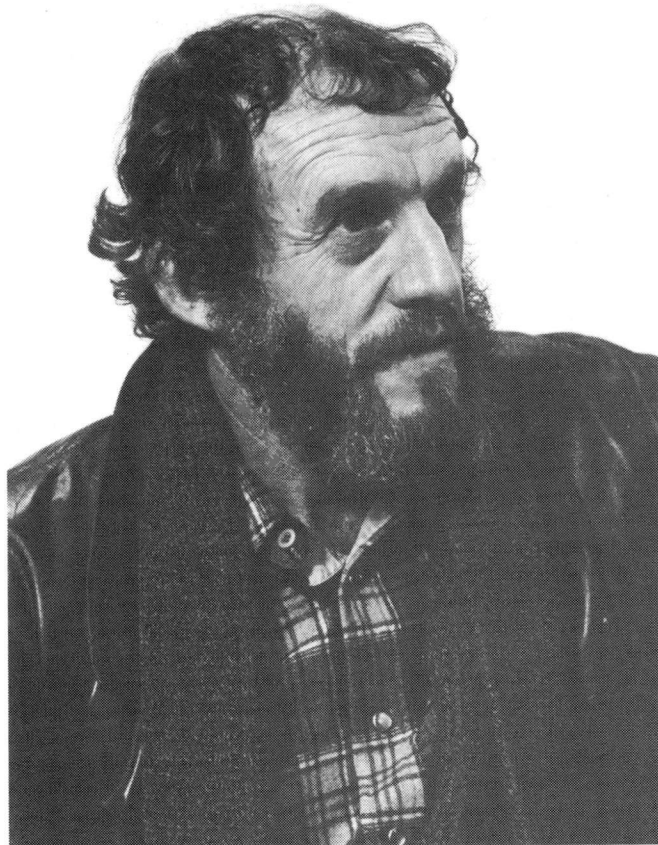
- 1975 Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Vic.
Ewing Gallery, Melbourne University, Vic.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1976 Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, S.A.
Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of N.S.W.,
Sydney.
- 1978 Fourth Indian Triennial, New Delhi, India.
Mildura Sculpture Triennial, Mildura, Vic.
Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy.
Beach Work, Cholamandal, India.
Art Projects, Melbourne.
- 1980 Fifteen Sculptors, Travelling Exhibition, Victoria
and N.S.W.
Lake Wakatipu Installation, New Zealand.
Markers One, Two, Three, Piamena, Tasmania.
Landscape \rightleftharpoons Art, two-way reaction, Australian
National Gallery at the Australian National Uni-
versity, Canberra, A.C.T.
First Australian Sculpture Triennial, Latrobe
University, Melbourne Vic.
Perspecta '81, Art Gallery of N.S.W., Sydney.
Art Projects, Melbourne, Vic.
Relics and Rituals, National Gallery of Vic-
toria, Melbourne, Vic.
- 1983 Biannual Survey of Contemporary Australian
Art No.1 Installation, Art Gallery of Western
Australia, Perth.
'Continuum', exhibition of Australian Art,
Tokyo, Lunami Gallery.
'Asian Interface', Crafts Centre, Sydney, N.S.W.
- 1984 'Australian Sculpture', Art Gallery of Western
Australia, Perth, W.A.
'Australia: Nine Contemporary Artists', Los
Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los
Angeles, Calif., U.S.A.
Elysian Park Installation, Los Angeles, Calif.,
U.S.A.
Acquisitions and Alternatives Sculpture, Mon-
ash University, Melbourne.
Second Australian Sculpture Triennial, Nat-
ional Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Sculptors as Craftsmen, Meat Market Craft
Centre, Melbourne.
- 1985 'Singular and Plural', a look at Australian Sculp-
ture 1975-1985, South Australian School of
Art, Adelaide, S.A.

COLLECTIONS

Australian National Gallery, Canberra, A.C.T.
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, N.S.W.
Shepparton City Art Gallery, Victoria.
Geelong City Art Gallery, Victoria.
Mildura City Art Gallery, Victoria.
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.
Hobart Art Gallery, Tasmania.
Wollongong City Art Gallery, N.S.W.
Brisbane Art Gallery, Queensland.
Newcastle Region Art Gallery, N.S.W.
Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth, W.A.
Melbourne State College, Victoria.
Brisbane Teachers College, Queensland.
Flinders University, South Australia.
Launceston School of Art, Tasmania.
Monash University, Victoria.

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Survey One, Robert Lindsay, National Gallery of Victoria.
Quadrant, October 1978, The Venice Biennale, Elwyn Lynn.
Australian catalogue, Venice Biennale, 1978, Elwyn Lynn,
Norbert Loeffler.
Official catalogue, Venice Biennale, 1978, Daniel Thomas,
Norbert Loeffler.
Catalogue, *Two Australian Artists at the Fourth Indian*
Triennial, 1978, Norbert Loeffler.
Catalogue, *Place*, Monash University, 1975, Noel Hutchison.
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Graeme Sturgeon, Thames and Hudson.
Art International, October 1978, The Venice Biennale,
Henry Martin.
Actual Art, *Skira Annual* 79, 'Model of History, Skira.
Art International, Vol. XXII/5-6, 1978, Elwyn Lynn.
Australian Sculptors, Ken Scarlett, Nelson.
Actual Art, *Skira Annual*, Special Issue 1970-1980, Skira.
Art in America, January 1981, Report from Australia,
Suzi Gablik.
Art and Australia, Autumn '81, Report from Australia,
Part 1, Suzi Gablik.
Art and Australia, Summer '81, Mildura Rides Again, Graeme
Sturgeon.
Artlink, May 1981, Common Culture: Community Sculpture
Rosemary Brooks.
Art and Australia, Summer '82, John Davis at Watters, Ken
Scarlett.
In No.9, December 1981, Exchange of Contemporary Work
(Japanese publication).
Ikebana Sogetsu, No.145, December 1982 (Japanese pub-
lication).
Ikebana Ryusei, No.273, 1983, Rod O'Brien (Japanese pub-
lication).
Art International, Vol. XXII/5-6, 1978, Elwyn Lynn.

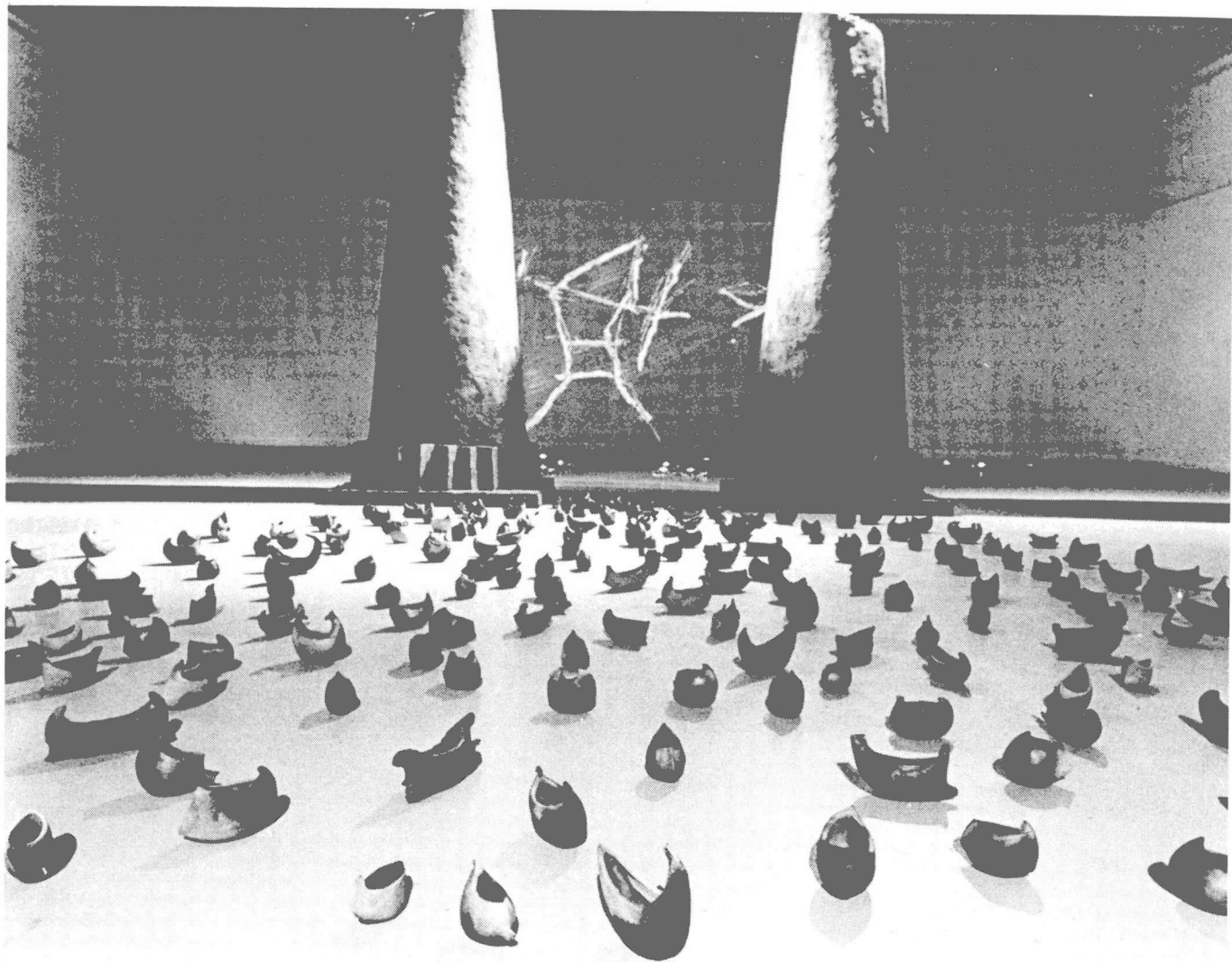


Ikebana Ryusei, No.227, 1979, Unvisualised Aspects of
Sculpture, Kyosuke Nakahara (Japanese publication).
The Geijutsu-Shincho, November 1982 (Japanese pub-
lication).
Ikebana Ohara, No.393, August 1983 (Japanese publication).
Ikebana Ryusei, No.283, (Japanese publication).
Australian Art Review, Warner Associates Publ., 1983, Pro-
vincialism, Pluralism, and Professionalism, Leon Paroissien.
Sculpture, Graeme Sturgeon.
Asian Interface, Australia-Japan, Dr. Peter Emmett, *Craft*
Australia, Summer 1983/84.
Continuum '83 Review, Tadashi Akatsu, *Art Network*,
Spring 1984.
In the Public Eye, Public Art in Australia, Neville Weston.
Sculpture at Mildura, Graeme Sturgeon, T & V James Off-
set Printing, Mildura.

STATEMENT

Since 1976 I have been able to work in my studio and in
the natural environment — both kinds of work relating to
each other by common bonds of space utilization, and
materials employed in the work's construction. Differences
occur when I choose to make an object in the bush or a
beach; from the materials at hand on the site, which in
turn specifically relate to scale and natural setting, evolves
a piece which is specially related to that place both in mood
and sense of time.

I think that the pieces that I make, either in the studio or
in the natural environment have a "sense of place".



IGEL HELYER

BORN

1951 Hampshire, United Kingdom.

STUDIES

- West Sussex College of Design (Foundation Year).
1974 Liverpool College of Fine Art, B.A. (Fine Arts).
1979 Royal College of Art, London. Awarded M.A.R.C.A.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 1971-82 Various employment throughout Europe, including England, Holland, France and Germany.
1983 Commenced Artist-in-Residence at the Western Australian Institute of Technology; also teaching a course in Video/Performance.
Artist-in-Residence at W.A.C.A.E., Mt. Lawley Campus.
1984/85 Working as an Arts Officer for Praxis Inc., with special responsibilities as curator of exhibitions and editor of the journal *Praxis M*.
1984 Guest curator at I.M.A. (Brisbane) of Media Space installation (also presenting Lecture/Performance in Brisbane).
1985 Presently Head of Sculpture at Sydney College of the Arts.

ELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1971-82 Various exhibitions throughout Europe, including England, Holland, France and Germany.
1983 One person exhibition of the installation "Terra Incognita Australis" at the Nexus Galleries, Fremantle, Western Australia, as part of the Perth Festival Fringe.
Open studio exhibition of the installation "Fertile Zone", WAIT campus.
Participant in the mixed exhibition "Show of Presence" at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia (touring).
One person exhibition of the installation "Voyages from Eden to Utopia; Ophiuchus", at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia.
Speaker for the Salek Minc lecture series at the University of Western Australia delivering a paper entitled, "Installation: a definition by default"; together with a simultaneous exhibition of the video installation "Ab: Originality" in the Nolan Room of the Undercroft Gallery, U.W.A.
Participant in performances given at the "Wizbah" Club, Perth, Western Australia.
"Chain of Command", a performance at the Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, Western Australia.
1984 Participant in the Festival of Perth showing the installation "Fruits of the Earth; Negotiations at the Dead Centre", Western Australian Museum.
One person exhibition of the installation "Voyages from Eden to Utopia; Hercules" at the Aspek Gallery, U.K.



- 1984 Participant in the "Boat Show", Praxis Gallery, Fremantle, W.A.
Participant in the 2nd Australian Sculpture Triennial, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1983/84 Various media coverage (Australia) including: ABC TV, ABC Radio, 6NR Radio, 4KZZZ Radio, *Western Mail*, *Sunday Times*, *Praxis M* No.2 and No.4, *Art in Australia*; (U.K.) *Portsmouth City News*, *Radio Victory*.

continued

STATEMENT

... — ... — The Re:construction Era ... — ... —

The corner of the sofa is really the safest place to be; I brace myself into an armchair foetal, my head retracted deep into my shoulders. The right-hand side of the screen is filled by three black triangles which heave up and down in slow motion; a series of diagonal white flashes and the set fills with smoke.

... — ... —

The child recoils as two percussive bars of Beethoven's fifth symphony fly abruptly through the speaker of the sixteen inch set which accompanies the score with heavy vibrations. The child is four years old and the year 1956; "Victory at Sea" is a medium through which one world attempts to colonise another.

... — ... —

The words start to roll up over the picture and my knees relax; my brother comes to sit next to me, abandoning his prone position behind the sofa, we know the worst is over. Dad says that he fried eggs on the deck of a troop-ship, later, at the supper table, he will send morse code messages with the cutlery.

... — ... —

As the children grow, the blue light of the sitting-room fades, they re-emerge to inhabit the woods and rough shingle beaches which form the perfect container for their actions. No longer able to tolerate the gaze of adults they learn the arts of camouflage and deception, living behind the lines of the adult world, utilizing every means at their disposal to explore it without the onus of direct contact.

... — ... —

The rules are plain and simple, if we stick to them we are totally invisible to grown-ups. Their failure to see gives us a real edge, especially if we need things from their gardens which border our land. Our main camp is well out of their range, past the fringe of the poplar copse and into the wheat fields. No-one else dares go down into the camp-site because it was made by big explosions in the past.

... — ... —

The twinned craters develop a special significance for the children who regard them as signs, perhaps gifts, from a period whose power had diverted the course of their parents' lives. Immediately below the rim of the craters exists a zone of transformation; a factory site for their imagination. The factory builds bridges.

... — ... —

If you could come down the first thing that you would notice is that we've got matches. Fires are very important in this camp because down here all the earth is clay and we use the fires to bake it hard. We dig two special types of tunnel,

the first type is to mine clay out of, the others are to build the furnaces in. The furnace tunnels go straight into the bank and then we dig a hole down from higher up; around the top hole we make woven chimneys out of willow wands and then we cover them in clay and straw. We keep the fires burning all the time to bake special bricks; if you came down you could see our buildings.

... — ... —

The plasticity of the heavy Wealden clay is immediately recognised by the children as synonymous with their desire. They do not hesitate, the chosen site naturally provides a chosen material. An entire economy springs into being, reality is manufactured below ground level. No questions asked, this is an enterprise with an ulterior motive.

... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... — ... —

This time the material is not so plastic, not so compliant with my intentions. It has become sticky, not through the simple admixture of the gentle but incessant rain of those parts. No, this is a stickiness of significance, a cloying of knowledge. It seems that even raw materials have become cunning with age, developing strategies of resistance, forcing me to keep my distance.

Clay the natural; clay the historical; clay the archaeologist's best friend. What can be done with such sincerity (for what is clay if not sincere?) In a culture so proficient at knowing, so circumspect, subversion is the only possible route! For the time being (pragmatism), clay is put in harness to counter that incessant process of erosion whereby all commentaries, all texts and constructions are worn down to the status of the inevitable, the "natural" (de-fused, grounded, rendered harmless, but still intriguing enough to be profitable). For the moment clay can play the part of the fall-guy in a dramatic contest of artifice versus the natural.

... — ... —

Postscript:-

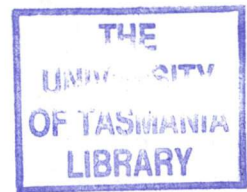
Tonight someone lies dreaming in their bed, directly above that ghost of an explosion; the building's foundations form a crust over our furnace sites: what malicious archaeology.

... — ... —

Nigel Helyer

Marie Sierra Hughes

Slide List for Documentation



1. Migration Pillow
Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Stones, Fired Clay.
42 cm long, 30 cm wide, 13 cm deep. 1984
2. Arena Pillow
Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Fired Clay.
42 cm long, 30 cm wide, 15 cm deep. 1984
3. Pillow: Untitled
Stabilized Raw Clay, Mixed Media.
43 cm long, 32 cm wide, 14cm deep. 1984
4. Arch with Arms, Legs
Stabilized Raw Clay, Wire, Fired Clay.
170cm high. 1984
5. Vaulted I
Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Mirrored Base,
Wood.
92cm high. 1984
6. Edifice Complex
Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Mirrored Base,
Wood.
120 cm high. 1984
7. Tripod
Stabilized Raw Clay, Wire, Paper, Flourescent Tubes,
Fired Clay.
120 cm high. 1984
8. Beachfront Gothic
Stabilized Raw Clay, Fired Clay, Wire, Wood.
25.5 cm high. 1984
9. Early Stilt
Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Painted Wood, Metal.
270 cm high. 1984
10. Queenstown Cycle
Stabilized Raw Clay, Wood, Nylon Mesh, Paint,
Styrofoam.
51 cm high. 1984
11. Rack
Stabilized Raw Clay, Paint, Plastic, Wood.
60 cm long, 60 cm wide, 12 cm high. 1984
12. Mangrove Hotel
Stabilized Raw Clay, Wire, Mangrove Seeds, Paint.
65 cm high. 1984

13. **Stilt**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint, Mangrove Seeds.
 53 cm high. 1984

14. **Paleograph: Arena**
 Stabilized Raw Glaze, Wood, Wire.
 46 cm high. 1984

15. **Paleograph**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Fired Clay, Wood, Wire.
 46 cm high. 1984

16. **Untitled**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Wood.
 89 cm high, 46 cm wide. 1984

17. **Untitled (Totem)**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Wood, Broom
 Bristle.
 22 cm high. 1984

18. **Totem I**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Grass, Plastic,
 Paint.
 52 cm high, 51 cm long. 1984

19. **Totem II**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Grass, Wood, Seeds.
 36 cm high, 69 cm long. 1984

20. **Reversed Monuments**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint, Metal.
 100 cm high. 1985

21. **Inverted Umbra**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Paint, Metal.
 Large Piece - 100 cm long. 1985

22. **Bearing**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Paint, Wood.
 Stick Approx. 214 cm long 1985

23. **Detail of Above.**

24. **Monument: Lost/Found, 1.**
 Process Work. Clay, Hessian, Wood. 1985

25. **Monument: Lost/Found, 2.**
 Process Work. Clay, Hessian, Wood. 1985

26. **Opposed Monuments II**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Paint, Styrofoam.
 100 cm high. 1985

- 27-28. **Animated Monument I**
 Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Wood, Fired Clay.
 120 cm high. 1985

- | | | |
|--------|---|------|
| 29-30. | Animated Monument II
Stabilized Raw Clay, Hessian, Fired Clay, Paper, Wire,
Plastic.
120 cm high. | 1985 |
| 31. | Arch
Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Grass, Paint.
75 cm high, 39 cm wide. | 1985 |
| 32. | Brick Tower
Stabilized Raw Clay, Red Paper, Grass.
80 cm high, 24 cm wide. | 1985 |
| 33. | Eclectic Edifice
Stabilized Raw Clay, Paper, Wire, Mangrove Seeds,
Wood, Plastic.
173 cm high. | 1985 |
| 34. | Black Paleograph
Black Paper, Wire, Wood, Fired Clay, Paint.
183 cm high. | 1985 |